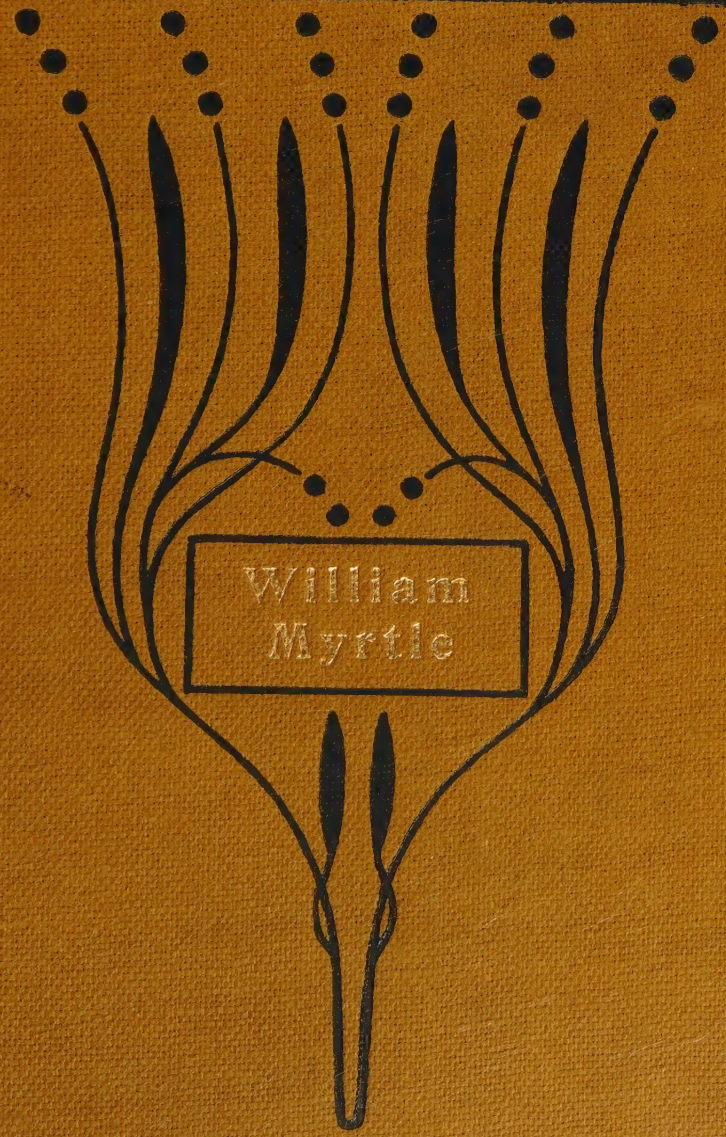
The Plagiarist



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UNIFORM WITH "THE PLAGIARIST"

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A GIRL IN TEN THOUSAND.

By L. T. MEADE.

WALDTRAUT: A STORY OF THE FOREST.

By M. RUDIGER.

Translated by SOPHIE G. COLVIN.

The Plagiarist

To Miss Kirke
With the Author's kindest regards.
25th Sept 1914.

The Plagiarist

By

William Myrtle

Edinburgh and London
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1897

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THE PLAGIARIST

CHAPTER I

A RED LETTER DAY

"ICHABOD! Ichabod!" ejaculated Gilbert Heath, as he linked his arm in that of his friend Archibald Grierson, whom he chanced to meet on the Mound, that most picturesque highway between the Old and New Towns of Scotland's romantic Capital.

"Is that what you see inscribed on an imaginary flag waving over the College battlements?" asked Archie, evidently guessing what passed in his friend's mind.

"It is," responded Bertie, amused that his meaning should be so quickly apprehended.

"I might have known as much, seeing that

you harbour all sorts of antiquated Tory notions."

"Your insight is indeed wonderful. I'll tell you what it is," protested Bertie vehemently, "the opening of the Edinburgh University to women is a gross injustice to both sexes. It makes them competitors, antagonists, and will do much to unsex women."

"Stuff and nonsense," interrupted Archie. "Why man, the new era is just dawning. A magnificent future is opening out for our sisters. They are going to qualify themselves to become fit comrades for their intellectual brothers."

"That's always the way with enthusiastic radicals. They look for the golden age in the future, and lo, it lies behind."

"A poor look-out for us if that be so. I suppose your golden age belongs to the Garden of Eden period," suggested Archie, sarcastically, "but surely life is a fuller, deeper, altogether more complex thing now compared with what it was then."

"My good friend, it's no use trying to draw me into a Biblical discussion. We shall see

what sort of blue stockings turn out to hear the Professor's lecture. I wonder what his subject will be."

The two chums had now reached a point on the Mound from which they could get an unrivalled view of the City. It was a glorious afternoon in the late autumn of 1892,—a great year for Edinburgh, for Scotland, ay, and for the World. It saw the abolition of a monopoly of more than three centuries' standing, and a splendid forward step taken in the battle waged on behalf of the complete emancipation of women. The ancient University of Edinburgh had at last flung open its gates to the fair sex. Oxford and Cambridge already possessed separate Colleges for women. There existed no such provision in Modern Athens —the City of the Intellect—though the trend lay in that direction. The memorable year 1892, however, beheld the necessity for any such separate College vanish. The citadel had been stormed and taken, and thenceforth women were to be admitted to the same Arts Course as men,—to compete on equal terms with them in the field of learning.

The student atmosphere was charged with controversial electricity, and there were consequent thunderstorms when young men, representing conservative and liberal attitudes of mind towards woman's sphere, met and discussed the all-engrossing topic of the hour. There might have been such a storm when Bertie and Archie chanced to meet on their way to the University to attend the Introductory Lecture of the Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature. It was frustrated, however, by the tact and good humour of both. They set too high a value upon their friendship to tarnish it over controversy no matter how enthralling. They paused involuntarily, and gazed, with fresh wonder and delight, on a scene familiar to them. They had been born and brought up in Edinburgh, yet they never grew indifferent to its charms. There are people devoid of poetry, romance, and enthusiasm. Place such in the most beautiful city of the world, and the grandeur around them will not touch their stolid natures. It is enough for them to labour for the meat that perisheth. Bertie and his companion

were not of this order. They could not behold their beloved natal city, in her grandly picturesque aspects, without being stirred in a strange deep way. They did not say much about the passion in their hearts. It was one of those themes too deep for language; but they looked unutterable things!

On their arrival at the University, they found the class-room, where Rhetoric and English Literature are, from session to session, imparted to youthful minds, crowded to excess. After an undignified struggle at the door, they only succeeded in securing standing space. The students were in a state of abnormal excitement. Ever and anon they broke out into snatches of popular songs with choruses,—the one chiefly in vogue being a ditty called "Clementine," the refrain of which commenced with the words, "Oh my darling!" This form of entertainment was varied by the well-known Students' Rap,—produced by two measured thumps of their sticks on the floor, followed by three quicker thumps. The scene was one of wild uproar and confusion.

About fifty women were present. Many of them looked timid and disconcerted. They were, evidently, unused to orgies of this description. When the Professor appeared on the platform, the tumult was instantaneously stilled. He put up his eye-glass, in his own peculiar manner, and surveyed the condition of the room. It was excessively crowded, and many, unable to gain admission, were pressing round the door and standing in the passage outside.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I beg pardon, Ladies and Gentlemen." (Thunders of applause—rapping—snatches of song—signals of disapproval—and a perfect babel of noises here completely drowned his voice.) He held up his hand for some time, impotently pleading for silence, and when that was at length obtained, continued,—"I see the room is over-crowded, and many are unable to gain admission. We will, if you please, adjourn to the Natural History Class-Room, which is more capacious."

No sooner was this announcement made, than there was a stampede across the Univer-

sity Quadrangle, thus affording an excellent opportunity, to students of the wilder kind, for a good deal of horse-play, and at the entrance to the Natural History Class-Room, there occurred an ugly *melée*. Bertie and Archie were borne on amidst the struggling throng, and did their best to shield from harm three maidens, — companions apparently, — who had, unfortunately, got mixed up with the rabble. One of the girls was forced into an angle beside the door and uttered a cry of pain and fear. Bertie happened to be near her. He turned savagely on several rough fellows, who were pushing rudely behind him, and angrily shouted, "Mind what you are about there! A lady is being hurt." At the same time he forced back the foremost of the unmannerly roughs, and cleared sufficient space to allow the fair girl to pass into the Class-Room. It was the work of a moment. Bertie never knew how he got the strength to do it. As she stepped safely in, the maiden raised her beautiful eyes to his, and he always declared that they expressed more than thanks.

After the assembled students were again seated, Bertie observed that the girl and her companions had been accommodated with chairs on the platform. He was so placed that he could get a splendid view of her face and figure, and his eager gaze drank in transcendent loveliness of feature and form.

"I say, Archie," he whispered, "who is that fair girl on the platform? I mean the one sitting next the brunette."

"I see two blondes," answered Archie, amused at his friend's impressiveness, "which of them do you refer to?"

"The one nearest us of course," said Bertie excitedly.

"Oh, that is Professor Marshall's only daughter."

"The Professor of Civil and Constitutional Law?"

"The same."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bertie, unable to conceal his agitation. "And what is her name?"

"Why should you take it for granted that I know?" asked Archie, glancing merrily at Bertie. "I think it is Gertrude."

"Ah, that is a sweet name."

"Look here, if you're going to rave like that, I'll call the Servitor, and have you ejected. Thank goodness! Here is the Professor. Now compose yourself for something worth listening to."

The Professor discoursed eloquently on Tennyson, the greatest of the Laureates, whom death had snatched from a mourning nation. He estimated the poet's place in literature, and hazarded the opinion that the national love of verse poetry was not on the wane. This was proved by the recent existence of such men as Browning and Tennyson. Then he described Tennyson's death,—how he lay in his chamber, which was flooded by soft moonlight rays, with an open volume of Shakespeare beside him, and how, in the radiance of that amber glory, his noble spirit passed. It was significant that Tennyson, in his death, should be associated with the miraculous Elizabethan, for all through his life, as the learned Professor pointed out, he had been loyal to the Avon Bard. The allegiance arose "from a conscious kinship

in modes of feeling and thinking, and inherited similarity of soul and constitution."

Bertie thought it a strange coincidence that, on such a unique occasion, so much should have been said regarding Tennyson, whose Princess is a powerful argument against the University education of women. In the story of the Princess, it was man who invaded the College of women, and by the potent agency of love, brought the intellectual schemes of Ida to naught. Now it was woman who invaded the College of men, and she too, alas, had introduced the revolutionary force of love. Bertie felt the truth of this in his own heart. All through the lecture he found himself gazing at Gertrude, and thinking about her. His literary ambition had been keen, but what was it compared to another ambition that seemed as if it were going to master him? Gertrude's was a type of beauty which Dante Gabriel Rossetti loved to portray. She had a wealth of light auburn hair, coiled in the form of a great knot at the back of her shapely head. Her eyes were large and lustrous,—blue as the sky above,—

and her pouting lips took the form of a perfect Cupid's bow. It was a face to attract attention among a thousand faces. Bertie, as he pondered its surpassing sweetness, could not help imagining that she must be like the blessed damozel of the poet. He recalled the lines—

> "Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Her hair that lay along her back
> Was yellow like ripe corn."

He applied these words to this queenly maiden, as she met his vision, not indeed leaning out from the gold bar of Heaven, but sedately seated on the platform of a University Class-Room.

Bertie and Archie said little as they walked home after the lecture was finished. When they separated, the former quietly remarked, "I mean to join Professor Marshall's Class.

CHAPTER II

THE STRONG-ROOM

A GREAT deal has been said and written in modern times about the law of heredity. If the advanced thinkers, in this fascinating branch of Science are to be believed, there is small ground for holding much longer to the doctrine of individual responsibility. Not only do we inherit the physical diseases and taints of blood of our ancestors, but their mental constitution as well. When men fondly deemed they were acting in accordance with free will, they are told that they only performed what they did in obedience to a stern law of necessity; that free will, in the true sense of the term, is a chimera; and that they are the victims of inherited instincts and tendencies, — mere complex automata in a ghastly automatic world. Scientists are going to close in upon

the human race, and with their logical system of materialism, and their unalterable law of heredity, are going to degrade it to the level of machines. Fortunately there are still left those who have not yet bowed the knee to this idol of the scientific brain. They believe in a spiritual universe, and intuitively know that it is not matter which governs mind, but mind which holds supreme sway. They acknowledge themselves to be responsible beings, and laugh at the notion that their liberty of choice is tampered with in the slightest degree. Their view of life is a sane, common-sense one.

What evil imp, then, it may pertinently be asked, weaves those original strands of wickedness into human nature? And how came it that Gilbert Heath, who was born of honourable, straightforward parents, had elements of deceit, dishonesty, selfishness, and hypocrisy bound up in his moral constitution? Ah! Here is a mystery no law of heredity can explain. Heath would puzzle his friend Grierson sometimes with his sweeping aphorisms. "All men are hypocrites!" Grierson

could not understand such wholesale denunciation of humanity. He liked Heath because they had many kindred tastes and sympathies. Their friendship dated from a memorable night at the Theatre, where, among the Gods, they heard the famous baritone Santley sustain the *rôle* of the Flying Dutchman in Wagner's fine Opera. That night music formed the cementing bond between the two, and the friendship thus begun proved helpful to both. While they possessed much in common, as members of the legal profession, as literary aspirants, and as lovers of music, Grierson did not really know what manner of man Heath was. He trusted and respected him, admired his abilities, and rightly judged him to be one of the most agreeable of companions. No word or act had ever leapt forth to reveal his true nature, and his occasional strange utterances were put down to thoughtlessness and haste, to the category of King David's, —"ALL men are liars."

Heath had served his apprenticeship to an old established legal firm, and was attached,

as one of the assistants, to the staff of the Conveyancing Department, — that is, the branch of a lawyer's business dealing with the transference of heritable and moveable property from one person to another, the completion of title, to estates vested in parties defunct, by Service and otherwise. Heath hoped, at one time, that he might manage to push his way into a partnership. That hope had vanished, and he was beginning to lose interest in his work. The truth is he never cared much for legal drudgery. His bias lay in the direction of a literary career, and in several amateurish efforts he had been eminently successful. As yet, however, he lived unknown to fame.

The senior partner of the firm which young Heath served was Mr Slowley,—a self-made man, and an arch diplomatist. When other men were lying sleeping in their beds Mr Slowley lay awake scheming. The curious thing was, that he succeeded in everything he undertook. The wave which overwhelmed victims in disaster sent him sprawling on its crest to the shore of fortune. Woe to the

wretch who incurred his displeasure, or against whom he took a dislike. That man's career was as good as ended. He never forgot or forgave an injury, supposed or real, and therefore those who knew him, and were any way in his power, approached him warily, and handled him deferentially. So long as they kept on his right side, he was as smooth as butter, and as agreeable a gentleman as could be met with. He wore a chronic imbecile smile on his face that deceived many, and spoke, or rather mumbled, in an indistinct way, producing a sound like the hum of a big bumble-bee in a bottle.

One day Gilbert Heath was summoned into the presence of Mr Slowley. He had favourably impressed the old man, who liked to encourage youths of ability.

"Ah, Mr Heath," mumbled the wily old Slowley, "I would like you to look into the matter of the Casuality payable to Lord Kickerbury——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Heath, not catching the last word.

"Lord Kickerbury," continued Mr Slowley,

smiling blandly, and speaking in a firmer tone, "a curious name. I daresay you won't have had much to do with his Lordship's business. I attended to it chiefly myself. It's an old affair now. I see from the newspapers that an estate, of which he is Superior, is about to be sold, and we will require to advise his Lordship of his rights, and open up a correspondence. I'm afraid you will have some difficulty in finding the Kickerbury Titles. They must be in the strong-room. I would like you just to take the matter in hand, and carry it through."

Gilbert Heath, having received his orders, retired, and forthwith proceeded to the strong-room to commence his search. The strong-room was a big fire proof safe of which the firm felt justly proud. It was situated at the end of an underground passage, and its entrance was guarded by double doors of massive iron, —these doors being fitted with locks of marvellous construction. It had been quarried out of solid rock on which the foundations of the superstructure rested,—and as it therefore possessed no window, the genial light of day

never penetrated this legal *sanctum sanctorum*. Those who entered its gloomy portals required to provide themselves with curiously designed lanterns, which shed a dim religious light throughout the vaulted chamber. The room contained smaller fire proof safes, and numerous boxes, ranged round its walls, tier above tier, to the very roof. In these dingy boxes were deposited security writs and scrip worth millions of money, titles, marriage contracts, patents of nobility, family trees and histories, jewels, plate, ancient charters,—some dating so far back as King Robert the Bruce, and King David, that "Sair Sanct to the crown," as he is known to students of Scottish history, and a variety of papers simply priceless in value. The strong-room was a veritable treasure house, filled with many literary curiosities and unique relics. No one really knew what it might be found to contain. Bertie, who, as the reader is aware, possessed literary and artistic ambition, revelled in the very thought of these things. He saw, spread out before his mind's eye, material for magnificent historical romances, for works shedding

fresh light on well-known authors, for commentaries on subjects of transcendent importance to the antiquary. As he pursued his search, building literary castles in the air, and dreaming of the future that held for him the coveted wreath of fame, he came across a box that arrested his attention and aroused his curiosity. It had no distinguishing label attached indicating to whom it belonged. The box, made of oak, was bound at the corners by peculiarly shaped metal clasps. Perhaps it held Lord Kickerbury's titles. If so, he might consider himself lucky, for it was weary depressing work, raking among musty, dust laden parchments, often without any result. He opened the box, and glancing at the papers on the top, experienced a disappointment. It did not contain the titles he sought. The feeling of disappointment soon gave way to one of surprise when he caught sight of a name that made his blood tingle with excitement. There, among the Executry papers of Umquhile Doctor Daniel Grieve, a well-known art connoisseur, lay a manuscript by Thomas Rushworth, one of the greatest portrait painters and art critics

of the nineteenth century, now dead. The precious document was backed in the late Dr Grieve's own handwriting, as follows,—"Notes on Florentine Painters given me by Thomas Rushworth, and not included among his published works." Heath opened the manuscript and ran his eyes greedily over its beautiful, clearly written pages. He observed that it furnished a list of the names of the great Italian masters, with valuable comments on their pictures. The style was eloquent, and, as he read, he became fascinated in an extraordinary degree. Suddenly he heard descending feet on the stair that led to the strong-room. His heart gave a startled bound, and, obeying the first impulse of the moment, he slipped the manuscript into his pocket, not an instant too soon. Mr Crossman, the head of the Conveyancing Department, entered. He was a heavily built man with a sullen countenance disfigured by a big wart. This blemish won for him, among the younger members of Messrs Slowley & Sharp's staff, the distinguished *sobriquêt* of "Cromwell." His face was livid with passion. From

his bloodshot eyes intense hatred glared. He was an able lawyer, but a man of coarse and brutal mind. Heath thoroughly detested him. Mr Crossman relieved his pent up spleen by a volley of oaths and curses. The outburst seemed to act as a safety valve to his choleric temperament. It would scarcely do to offend the reader's ear with the choice flowers of speech that Mr Crossman hurled at his assistant, who might well have fancied a devil from hell had been let loose upon him.

"Have you found the titles you said you were going to search for?" snarled Mr Crossman, as soon as the first awful explosion of his wrath was over.

"No."

"You've just been wasting your time down here. Its a damned shame. Come upstairs at once."

"Look here," cried Bertie, crimsoning with passion, "I won't be spoken to in that fashion."

"You refuse to obey me then?"

"I do not. I know what I am about, and I think I know my place, but you will have to treat me with civility."

Mr Crossman marched away sulkily, and Bertie followed, slamming the doors of the strong-room behind him, and turning the keys. His whole frame trembled with rage. He would like to have rushed at Mr Crossman and given him some stunning blows straight from the shoulder. Such a course, he knew, would have meant instant dismissal, and perhaps an action in Court on a charge of assault, so he restrained the tempest that surged within his breast.

Scenes like these, the bitter sense of being in the grip of a grinding tyrant, sickened Bertie at his profession and made him long for independence. He hugged his literary ambition more fervently than ever.

When the storm of rage and vexation subsided, Bertie remembered the manuscript in his pocket. What would he do with it? Return it to its box? No. He would take it home and read it. It might be a help to him in connection with a work on art he was then busily writing, and hoped to have ready for the press on an early date. Accordingly he carried it home, and in the solitude of his

own room studied its contents. He discovered in the manuscript some splendid passages that fitted exactly into his own book, and he resolved to incorporate them. Conscience gave him an uneasy night. He debated with himself through the silent hours of darkness. If he were found out he would be stigmatised as a plagiarist. What was plagiarism? Literary theft. It was a mean thing to steal the fruit of another man's brain and pass it off as one's own. Conscience proclaimed it the act of a sneak. The literary pirate might be bad enough, yet the pirate had the courage to step manfully before the world and proclaim that what he had published was robbed from another; but the plagiarist acted the part of a dastardly hypocrite. Bertie dashed these stinging thoughts aside. He told himself the deed would never be found out, and that fortune had done him a lucky stroke in putting the manuscript in his possession. Was plagiarism such a sin after all? The clergy were not infrequently convicted of it and it was a crime which lay at the door of many men of genius. Their reputation seemed to be no more affected

by it than were the light and heat of the sun by those spots the astronomers made such a fuss about. So Bertie sophisticated at the bar of his inward judge.

No man becomes a great criminal at one fell bound. There has been a career of wrong-doing, commencing with apparently trivial delinquencies, and progressing to graver faults, before the sinner is ripe for the grand opportunity when it presents itself. The moral sensibilities gradually become blunted through habits of sin, till the victim loses the power of justly estimating the enormity of the deed for which he has ripened himself. Gilbert Heath, the outwardly refined and cultured gentleman, possessing many lovable qualities, had committed numerous petty acts of dishonesty. As a schoolboy he cheated his companions, and as a student at College he cribbed at his examinations, and appropriated other men's thoughts, — copying them verbatim into his essays. These offences, against the spirit of rectitude, had never once been discovered, and thus the moral powers of Bertie's mind were, in certain directions, warped and stunted.

As is not uncommon, among those who are conscious of deterioration, he was abnormally sensitive about his honour, and most relentlessly condemned in others those very faults he had himself been guilty of perpetrating.

CHAPTER III

FAINT HEART NEVER WON FAIR LADY

THE deed was done. Long passages, copied from Thomas Rushworth's Notes, were inserted by Gilbert Heath in his work entitled, "Italy's place and influence in the domain of pictorial art—a critical estimate." The book was the practical outcome of a Continental Tour which he took in the company of a rich bachelor uncle, who, of course, defrayed all expenses. Most of the time had been spent in Italy,—at Rome, Florence, and Venice. From copious jottings, made in Galleries and Public Buildings, Bertie resolved to give his impressions to the world. He was no mean artist, had painted several very clever sketches, and being gifted with the critical faculty, he considered himself qualified for the task which he had undertaken. The masterpieces of Italy revealed to him undreamt of

beauty and meaning. He was overwhelmed by the wealth of genius. As a lover of art he was a diligent student of the literature that dealt with the subject. He was well versed in the leading authorities, — in the works of Thomas Rushworth, portrait painter and critic ; in those of John Ruskin, the Aristotle of Art; and also in those of Mrs Jameson, who has been called "the female Ruskin." Her little treatise on the Italian painters had been one of his constant companions during the memorable tour. When brought face to face with reality, he felt that the half had not been told regarding the matchless splendour of the Italian schools, and on his return to this country he essayed the tempting, though difficult theme. His book was near completion, but he hesitated about its publication, till, by the strange accident narrated in the preceding chapter, he became possessor of Rushworth's original Notes. Their partial appropriation decided the fate of his book. Yes, and his own fate also. No sooner had it been published, than it caught on in a marvellous fashion. The sale

was unprecedented. The critics were friendly without exception. None slated his first public effort. He was himself taken by surprise, as he read such sentences as these,—"A new light has arisen on the subject of art. This critical estimate is evidently written by one thoroughly conversant with his subject. The power and freshness of the book come of a knowledge acquired at firsthand."

"We are not sure whether to admire more the eloquent style of the writer, or the originality of many of the conceptions."

"Those who think that John Ruskin and Mrs Jameson have exhausted what can be said on the subject of Italian art, would do well to purchase this charming manual. We augur a successful future for the gifted author."

Such was the tone of the critics. Gilbert Heath became at once a person of note in the literary world. He drank deeply of the delicious draught of praise, but the cup was poisoned with remorse. How gladly would he have recalled the first edition, and expunged those passages he feared, against all reason, might some day be discovered, and his

name held up to obloquy and scorn. A line from one of Shakespeare's sonnets haunted his memory—

"'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed."

He knew himself to be vile, but it was his own secret. No one would ever ferret out his guilt. He would pass in the crowd which jostled feverishly along in the mad scramble for fame. Ah! he forgot that the moment a man becomes famous he ceases to be one of the crowd. He rises to be a person of mark, and curious prying eyes are directed at him, and the public will not let him alone. Blessed obscurity becomes, for such a one, a thing of the past. At least so Bertie found it. With literary fame came his admission to a select social circle. Of course his career was now mapped out for him, and he said good-bye without a single pang of regret to the legal profession. The training had done him good.

Professor Marshall sat in his study correcting the proof sheets of a learned commentary he had written on the Institutes of Justinian. He looked like one of those proud Roman

civilians, of whose codes and rules he possessed so profound a knowledge,—a knowledge that had won for him a foremost place among the Jurists of Europe. Gertrude sat in the room beside him, dipping into newspapers and magazines. She admired her father, and loved him too, though she confessed to herself that she was just a trifle afraid of him. There did not exist the perfect bond of sympathy between them. He devoted himself to his books, and took little interest in any department of literature outside civil and constitutional law. He had, indeed, one hobby, eccentric, it may be thought, to a man of his normally quiet, studious habits; and that consisted in an intense fondness for the construction of mechanical models. To this curious pursuit he devoted not a little of his leisure. He was specially proud of two model railway trucks, made in order to show, to the best advantage, an ingenious device, invented by himself, for coupling waggons automatically, thus minimising the risks run by railway servants engaged in a dangerous operation. Some of his friends advised him to take out a patent for the inven-

tion, but he stoutly declared that, in the interests of humanity, his invention should be free to all who cared to adopt it. He took a great pride in Gertrude, and, observing at an early stage in her life that she possessed exceptional ability, had given her a splendid education. With credit to her preceptors she passed all the examinations requisite for the M.A. degree, though the honour of being able to place these magic letters after her name had hitherto been denied her. She intended, however, to be capped at the first Graduation Ceremonial.

"Father, will you be at the library to-day?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then I wish you would ask the librarian to send me R. L. Stevenson's 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde,' and a new book on Italian Art, which I see is much praised by the critics."

"That reminds me," said the Professor, taking out his notebook, "I've never seen an important article in the leading 'German Law Journal' on the famous Verona Palimpsest, which Jurists found to be the long lost Gaius. I must make a note of it." Here the Professor rummaged among his papers, and then made a

jotting in his pocket-book. "You were wanting some books, love. I forget what they were."

"'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' by Stevenson, and 'Italy's place and influence in the domain of pictorial Art' by Gilbert Heath."

"That's a long title. You might repeat it, dear."

Gertrude repeated it.

"By whom did you say it was written?" asked the Professor, glancing over the rims of his gold eye-glasses.

"Gilbert Heath."

"Is he an Edinburgh man?"

"I don't know, father."

"Well, that is curious. There is a young man of that name in my Class this Session. I always thought his appearance artistic. Surely he can never be the author of the book."

"Is he one of your distinguished students?"

"Oh, dear, no! He should have been at one of my Breakfast Parties ere this if he had made a good *per centage* in his examinations. By the way, Gertrude, my darling, I dine with Sir Edwin Lloyd to-night."

So saying, Professor Marshall kissed his

lovely daughter and went forth to the duties of the day.

The College Session wore on. Bertie had matriculated, and joined the Civil and Constitutional Law Class on the impulse of the moment. He was the creature of impulse. He cherished a sort of undefined hope that it would bring him nearer to Gertrude. The Professor was her father. As the days and weeks went by, and he discovered he had done a foolish thing, his enthusiasm cooled down a bit. The lectures might be interesting enough to those who cared for such studies,—to him they were dry as dust. He ceased to attend regularly, he did none of the Class work, and he viewed the whole thing as a hollow sham. He began to blame himself for not making an effort to stand well among his fellow-students. A tolerably fair *per centage* at the fortnightly exams. would have provided him with a passport to the Professor's table, and there he would have met the adorable Gertrude. Alas! The golden opportunity had been lost.

Meantime, Gertrude obtained Bertie's book

on the Painters of Italy, and had several talks with her father on the subject of it. She was curious to find out if it was actually the case that the author attended his Class.

"Well, papa, have you asked Mr Heath about the book?"

"No, dear. I quite forgot."

"Do try and remember to ask him to-day, please, and, if he is the author of it, I would like you to invite him to my 'At Home' on the 20th."

"You seem to have found the book a great treasure."

"Yes, I have. Some of its passages are beautiful. I will read those I have marked, if you care to listen to them, to-night."

"I do not doubt your good taste, my dear, but I would prefer if you would help me tc correct some of these proof sheets," said the Professor, looking slyly at Gertrude.

"Oh, papa! How could you ask me to do such a thing. You like to tease me!"

The immediate result, of the conversation just recorded, was that Bertie got a surprise that day. At the close of the lecture, Professor

Marshall, naming him, requested him to remain after the Class dispersed. Bertie went to the Professor's retiring room with a beating heart.

"Glad to see you, Mr Heath," said the Professor, extending his hand. "Are you the author of that book on Italian Art which is creating such a sensation just now?"

Bertie bowed, and acknowledged his authorship of the book by blushing furiously, like a bashful maiden.

"Allow me to congratulate you," continued the Professor, ascribing Bertie's confusion to modesty. "My daughter has been reading your work, and, through her, I have heard a great deal about it. I told her that someone, bearing the same name, was a member of my Class, and she insisted on my ascertaining if you were the writer of the book. We are having a gathering of friends on the 20th of the month. My daughter will send you an invitation. I hope you can come."

"I shall be delighted, and thank you very much."

"You must have travelled in Italy."

"Yes, with my uncle, Dr Freemantle."

"Is he your uncle? I know him well. How is he?"

"In capital health and spirits, when last I heard from him. He is at present in Spain visiting old churches and convents."

"Ha, ha, ha! I see, I see. Your uncle is away riding his hobby horse. It's a good thing to be rich, and to have no encumbrances."

Thus it came about that Bertie received his long wished for invitation. On receipt of it he went to see his friend Grierson, whom he found in his snuggery smoking a fragrant weed. Grierson was the son of a wealthy merchant, and had recently started in business, on his own account, as a lawyer. He found it uphill work, but with plenty of capital at his back, he could afford to wait patiently for the turn of fortune's wheel.

"Hullo, Heath! It's you is it? I'm glad to see you. You've been a bit of a stranger lately."

"You know the reason. I am getting up in the world now."

"And can afford to neglect your old friends."

"Exactly. You have hit the mark, with your usual precision."

"I suppose you have cut the legal profession?"

"Not altogether. I still go to Marshall's Class."

"Cunning dog! You expect to get your legs under the Professor's mahogany."

"Certainly. Why not?"

"You'll never get there without a *per centage*, and I'm quite sure you have not done any grinding for his exams."

"You are right in your surmise, my boy; but, all the same, Grierson, I have just received an invitation to the Professor's house, on the 20th, and I came purposely to tell you of my good luck."

Archie laid down his Havana, and gave his friend a look from top to toe, in which wonder and amusement mingled.

"Then you will get an introduction to your Princess after all," remarked Grierson, referring to Gertrude, whom the two friends always called by that royal title.

"Of course I shall. Joking apart though, Grierson, I love that girl, yet I feel as if I shall never be worthy of her."

"Bosh, man! You're famous, handsome, and agreeable. The very man such a girl will make a hero of, if you woo and win her."

"Then you think I may be successful?"

"Assuredly I do."

The friends discussed this interesting problem, far into the morning, amid clouds of smoke. The grey dawn was breaking when Bertie took his departure, and sought his couch to dream of the golden-haired Gertrude.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL TORTURES

BERTIE breathed the atmosphere of a new life. No longer a legal drudge, he was master of his own time, and employed it in work thoroughly congenial to his nature. He felt that he had shaken himself from the shackles of the slave, and had become a free man. The memory of Gertrude's sweet face and graceful form ever dwelt with him in his new venture,—a vision of beauty to inspire and gladden. When a man is in love, even though he be not a religious man, a great change comes over him. He makes resolutions to amend his ways, hates his evil past, and determines that nothing shall be wanting, on his part, to make himself worthy of the maiden upon whom his affection is set. The prospect of meeting Gertrude filled Bertie with joy unutterable, but it also made him

fear and tremble. It caused him to realise his own unworthiness and meanness. How dared he attempt to make love to so pure and noble a creature? She would detect his insincerity, and—oh God—if she ever discovered his past. The very thought scorched. Ah! He would make himself worthy of her, if that were possible. Hope springs eternal in the human breast, and so in a cheerful frame of mind, he proceeded to Professor Marshall's house, and was ushered into the crowded drawing-room. The Professor stood near the door, with Gertrude at his side, when Bertie's name was announced.

"How are you, Mr Heath? Allow me to introduce you to my daughter."

Gertrude and Bertie bowed to each other, and shook hands. She gave an involuntary start, and her face crimsoned over.

"We have met before," she said simply.

Her father looked puzzled. They seemed to be acquainted with each other. Bertie passed on, mingled with the brilliant assemblage, and soon found friends to engage his attention. Several Lords of Session and

their wives were present, as well as representative men at the bar. The scene was one of great animation. Groups of ladies, exquisitely dressed, appeared among the sombrely attired batches of men, like beds of flowers in the summer garden. Soft light, —shed from silk-shaded lamps,—perfumed air, the sound of many voices, deep murmurs mingling with musical tones, and merry laughter breaking forth here and there like the fitful breeze that ripples the surface of smooth water, produced sensations of colour, scent, and melody, dear to the social heart. Bertie felt the power of these subtle influences, and under the ministry of praise, his nature expanded, and he became voluble and genial. He received congratulations on the success of his book with apparent humility. What he eagerly longed for, however, was to have a quiet talk with Gertrude, so he watched his opportunity, and, observing her disengaged, took a seat beside her. Never did she look so beautiful. Her golden hair was done up in a simple classic coil at the back, and her sole ornament consisted of a

small diamond star, which had belonged to her mother. Her lips, when parted, disclosed pearly teeth, and Bertie, gazing ardently upon her, realised, for the first time in his life, the poetry of a smile. Gertrude wore a black gown of thin gauze-like material, which served to enhance the grace of her figure, her snowy arms, and her finely moulded neck. Language is a poverty-stricken thing when it attempts to describe the concentrated charms of Gertrude in repose. Bertie confessed to himself that she was a veritable dream of beauty. People of practical and unromantic minds will relegate such lingo to the category of lover's hyperbole, but for Bertie, in his frame of mind, it was a sober reality. He could have kissed the ground her little slippered feet rested upon.

"I never thanked you for your kindness on the opening day of the College Session," said Gertrude.

"Oh, yes you did. You looked your thanks."

"It was a dreadful crush, and I got such a fright."

"You were not hurt, I hope?"

"Not much. I think fear made me cry out. I was ashamed of my conduct afterwards. We women are cowards at heart."

"Are you a member of the Rhetoric Class?"

"No. I went with two of my friends to give my moral support to a great forward movement."

"I see. You believe in the complete emancipation of women."

"That is a sweeping statement. I don't know that I should go quite so far as complete emancipation. We are glad to have some of our chains struck off. Are you in sympathy with the movement?"

"No. Mine is the chivalrous standpoint. I believe the modern woman will get more harm than good from imbibing the notions now current."

"Then I fear you and I are not likely to agree on this everlasting woman question; ah, do not let us wrangle about it. I'm not in a mood for argument to-night, and you men are so logical when you begin a discussion. You must thrash it out to the bitter end. I

suppose this is a proof of your virility. Why is it that all the powerful words have been appropriated by men? It's just because women have not had a fair chance. They have been, and must, I fear, always be handicapped in the intellectual race."

"I perceive you do wish to discuss the problem."

"Come now, you know I don't," said Gertrude laughing, "let's find a more congenial topic. I've been reading Stevenson's 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.'"

"Do you call that a congenial topic?" asked Bertie, raising his eyebrows in feigned astonishment.

"Oh its a gruesome story, and all that sort of thing; but it's literature, you know."

"I agree with you. It is one of the most powerful little books of modern times."

"It teaches truth in a terribly realistic way."

"True. You mean the doctrine of the dual nature of man, and the influence of habit on character."

"That is so."

"Don't you think, however, he might have taught these truths, without bringing to his aid a chemist's drug, and without introducing visible physical changes in the body?" asked Bertie, anxious to shine.

"Yes, now that you suggest it, I think he might."

"The probability of the story is marred by such devices."

"Perhaps, but the truths are taught all the same."

"Undoubtedly. Do you know I believe there is a good deal of the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in every man."

Gertrude opened her blue eyes widely in surprise.

"Ah no!" she exclaimed with a sigh. "You don't mean that seriously. I should lose faith in everybody if I entertained so awful a thought."

Bertie noticed that a troubled expression passed over Gertrude's noble face, and he felt he had made a mistake in formulating what he foolishly supposed to be an aphorism, comprehensive in its application. He re-

mained silent for a little time. At last he said:

"Pardon me, but who is that dark girl over there? I remember she was with you at the Tennyson lecture."

"That is Miss Sheldon, my Pauline, as I always call her. Come, let me introduce you to her."

So saying, Gertrude conducted Bertie across the room to where Pauline was seated. Pauline was a complete contrast to Gertrude. She had an olive complexion, and her face approximated to the Spanish type of beauty. Her glossy black hair was confined by strands of coral, and, on her shapely arms, she wore curiously wrought Indian bracelets. Her softly rounded features proclaimed a quiescent nature, while those of Gertrude betokened a restless, energetic, enquiring spirit. After Bertie was introduced, Gertrude said, with a touch of pride:

"Mr Heath is one of the lions of the evening. I suppose my Pauline has read his new book."

"I have. How proud you must be, Mr

Heath, to have written so original a work. I admire it very much."

"Do I look proud?" asked Bertie, a trifle vexed that the subject of his book should ever and anon be mooted.

"Of course you don't. What I like best about your critical estimate is the patriotic note you touch," said Pauline.

"I'm glad to hear you say so. I was at a lot of trouble to give due emphasis to that side of my subject. Why, here in Edinburgh, we have not a National Gallery worthy of the name. Neither the building nor the collection of pictures, taken as a whole, is creditable to the Capital of Scotland."

"I think you are quite right, Mr Heath," said Gertrude, "I know that the finest pictures in our country are hidden away in private collections. The nation does not get the benefit of them, and they are not fulfilling the mission their creators intended them to fulfil. Our rising artists require all the inspiration that can be obtained from the works of genius, —especially those within easy reach. Do you not agree with me, Pauline?"

"I do. Great works by the old masters should not be the property of private individuals. Their owners should be paid their fair market value, by way of compensation, and they should be bound to surrender them to the nation."

"Then you believe in the nationalisation of Art," observed Bertie, amused at the turn which the conversation had taken.

The ladies smiled.

"Not all art," remarked Gertrude, "only the best art. I agree with you in thinking that it is the duty of the State to endow Art Schools, to purchase pictures of outstanding merit, to provide in all large towns suitable Galleries for the exhibition of paintings, to foster the taste for art among the people by all legitimate means, and to pension men of genius, thus setting them free from sordid pecuniary cares, and enabling them to follow the lead of their own noblest ideals. In this way they would be emancipated from the thraldom of individual caprice, a thraldom which has done so much to degrade the art of our day. There is a programme for you!

Of course I confess, Mr Heath, I have borrowed a lot of my notions from your book, but that only shows I am your admirer, and may become your pupil."

"Miss Marshall, may I ask what part of my book you liked best?" enquired Bertie, gallantly confronting his Princess, and feeling flattered by the kindly way in which she had spoken.

"Let me see. Ah, yes. There are some exquisite passages descriptive of Florentine Madonnas. I was so enamoured with one of them that I copied it out. It is the passage where you affirm that art reached the summit of its glory when the artist laboured in the spirit of religious devotion, and where you prove that whenever religion and art are divorced the latter has lost its crown."

A shadow passed over Bertie's face. Gertrude had copied one of the passages plagiarised from Thomas Rushworth's Notes. Her praise stung him like an adder. His conscience was not asleep. A moment ago he had been quite happy. The scene had

not changed. He was still surrounded with bright faces. His ears still tingled with the appreciative remarks which had been poured into them. It was he himself who had suddenly changed. An innocent word of praise, from the lips of the girl he loved, had been as the plunging of a dagger into a sensitive congeries of nerves. That worm conscience turned within him, and he experienced an agony, compared with which mere physical pain is as nothing. Gertrude observed his confused and troubled appearance. She could not explain the cause of the change that had swept over his manly features. His eyebrows were contracted, his facial muscles twitched violently, something very like a scowl settled upon his countenance, and he involuntarily clenched his hands. Surely, thought Gertrude, there is a mystery connected with this tall handsome man. She began to feel uncomfortable in his presence. Fortunately, for Bertie, a song obviated the necessity for further conversation, just at the moment when he felt so supremely miserable, and utterly incapable of collecting his

scattered thoughts. The words of the song were by Shelley.

> " When the lamp is shattered
> The light in the dust lies dead—
> When the cloud is scattered
> The rainbow's glory is shed.
> When the lute is broken,
> Sweet tones are remembered not ;
> When the lips have spoken,
> Loved accents are soon forgot."

Both the sentiment and the music of the song seemed to sympathise with the melancholy mood into which Bertie passed. He did not talk much more that night, nor did his former light-heartedness or literary sparkle return, though several ladies begged for his autograph, and he received an invitation from Pauline Sheldon's mother to meet some literary celebrities. He stepped forth into the darkness a miserable wretch.

CHAPTER V

THE GLORIES OF INDEPENDENCE

THE man with a skeleton in his closet has two devices for distracting his attention from the heap of bones that have such a fascination for his memory and imagination,—namely, hard work and abundant recreation. Gilbert Heath called both these devices into requisition. Not only did he work with might and main at a new book, but he utilised a lot of material which he had gathered in the course of his student and legal careers. Papers on Meredith, Tennyson, and Browning, short racy stories, in which his legal knowledge and experience came to his aid, and clever sketches from his Common-place Note Books, were looked out and revised, and soon found places in the leading Magazines and Journals of the day. In his recreations he nurtured, so far as he possibly could, the artistic side of his nature.

He listened to recitals by such virtûosi as Paderewski, Joachim, Sir Charles and Lady Hallé, — he witnessed performances by Sir Henry Irvine and Helen Terry,—he visited exhibitions of paintings, and wrote critical notes on such pictures as took his fancy. He did not, indeed he could not, deny himself the pleasures of social intercourse. He found that mingling among men and women of all ranks and conditions, more than any other agency, stimulated his mental powers. He went about on the outlook for "Copy," and every event and personage were appreciated with the view to ultimate utilisation in connection with the literary profession which he had adopted. In this respect he became really a most obnoxious member of society, nothing escaped his observation, all was grist that came to his mill, and many things, recounted to him in the confidence and unguarded frankness of friendship, were drest up into anecdotes of marketable value.

When Bertie threw up his situation and the prospect of legal success, he had an out-and-out row with his father, who had no liking for

literature as a profession, since its remunerative prosecution was beset with uncertainty, and spelt beggary in so many cases. Mr Heath, senior, was an intensely practical man, and regarded a substantial credit balance at the bank as of far more account than any amount of windy fame. This quarrel with his governor resulted in the setting up of a separate establishment by Bertie, who soon discovered that what his shrewd parent predicted had more truth in it than was palatable. At times he found himself in actual straits for coin, and would contemplate the sign of the three gilt balls with wistful eyes. If he had a fault, it was profuseness when in funds. He worked like a horse, and spent like an ass.

One day while he toiled away, with a load of care on his mind, his uncle, Benjamin Freemantle, turned up. It is a strange thing that rich old uncles have a way of turning up at the most opportune moments. In the economy of the modern novel, they occupy pretty much the place which the Gods did in the machinery of the Greek Drama. They extricate the hero from some overwhelming

difficulty, they prevent him from making shipwreck of his life, and so, averting catastrophe, permit the piece to proceed smoothly as before.

"Why, uncle, you take me completely by surprise," said Bertie, throwing down his pen, and rising to welcome his relative.

"Glad to see me, hey? You look dull and seedy."

"Do I? It's not with dissipation then, I can assure you."

"Hard work has done it, my boy. You should have been with me in Spain. Those Murillos!" Here words failed Benjamin Freemantle to express all that arose in his mind, at recollection of the glorious Spanish masterpieces. The old man produced his cigar case, and the fragrance of Havanas soon pervaded the whole room.

"I have just come from your father, who informed me you had turned author. He seems to think you have done a foolish thing, but I told him you were a brick, and were quite right to carve out your own destiny."

"Did the governor speak about the row we had over it?"

"Yes, he hinted at something of the kind, and appeared to be sorry."

"I was awfully cut up at the time, but I did not want him to think I was going to be a burden, so I cleared out of the nest, and here I am."

"And able to get along tolerably well," said Uncle Benjamin, glancing round the snugly-furnished room, and at the crowded book-shelves.

Bertie could have enlightened his uncle as to the true state of his affairs, but he kept his own secret. His face, however, betrayed care and anxiety.

"I daresay you find literature uphill work to begin with. Come, be frank with me. How much have you made since you started this line of business?" asked Uncle Benjamin, laying his hand on Bertie's shoulder.

Bertie mentioned a sum.

"That is so far good," continued the old man, "but no doubt you are sometimes in low water. Confess."

Bertie could not deny it, and Benjamin Freemantle took his cheque-book from his breast-pocket and wrote out a cheque in Bertie's favour for a substantial amount, and handed it to his nephew.

"Oh, uncle!" exclaimed Bertie, "you are too kind."

"Don't mention it, my boy, but remember this, I've made my Will, and you're not down for a single penny, so you needn't be looking for anything when I croak."

"All right," laughed Bertie, "you've told me that before. Thanks, all the same, for what you have given me now."

"Stick in and you'll get to the top of the tree. There's nothing like pluck. Look at me. I commenced with the proverbial shilling." And, so saying, Benjamin Freemantle struck himself a proud blow on the chest.

"You'll stay and take lunch, uncle."

"No, Bertie, I'm booked for lunch at my old friend Professor Marshall's house at two o'clock, so I must be off, but you will dine with me at the Caledonian Club to-night, and we shall talk over the Spanish tour."

The arrangement was welcome to Bertie, and the old man vanished. He left his nephew a different being from the one he found him. Oh the magic power of gold! It banishes care, and reinstates self-confidence. It finds black clouds, and quickly dispels them, leaving instead a ruddy glory. To him who hath need, it is the wine and the joy of life, the buoyant step, the merry laugh, the mood to dare, and the ability to command success.

Benjamin Freemantle, as he walked away, did not guess how much radiancy he had been the means of shedding into a dark and troubled heart. What were a few hundred pounds to a man of his wealth? Money had lost much of its charm for him. Sometimes he regarded it in the light of an encumbrance. The thought of it often disturbed his tranquillity. He felt displeased at the way in which Bertie had been treated by his father, and he admired the spirit of his nephew, who had always been a favourite. He determined to alter his settlements, and accordingly wrote that day to his solicitors in London, with instructions for the

preparation of a codicil, in which he named Gilbert Heath as his sole residuary legatee. This meant that, after payment of his sick-bed and funeral expenses, debts, Government duties, and several legacies, the remainder of his estate would belong, absolutely, to Bertie. Uncle Benjamin did not think it wise that the young man should have any inkling of the good fortune in store for him, as it might tend to make him lazy and indifferent, and so injury his best interests.

While Gertrude presided at lunch, she heard her father and Dr Freemantle discussing Bertie's prospects.

"Your nephew is one of my students," remarked the Professor.

"And doubtless distinguished himself."

"He took no place, I am sorry to say, in my class."

"That is strange, for he has already made his mark in literature."

"So I believe."

"Have you read this wonderful book of his?" enquired Benjamin Freemantle, turning to Gertrude.

"Oh, yes, and it is splendid. You should be proud of your nephew."

"I am indeed. I think he has more than average ability."

"I should go further than that," said Gertrude with enthusiasm, "I should say his book gives the promise of budding genius."

"You admire him then," said Dr Freemantle, setting a little trap for the maiden to fall into.

"I admire his writing," promptly observed the wary Gertrude, at the same time blushing deeply.

"What is the subject of my nephew's production?" asked Dr Freemantle, not failing to notice the girl's confusion, and mentally drawing his own conclusions.

"It is about Italian Art," answered Gertrude.

"The fruit of our tour together in Italy, I expect," explained Dr Freemantle. "Well, well, that is most gratifying. I only wish he had been with me in Spain, then there might have been a second book to astonish the world. Do you know, Professor, I am happy to think my nephew has a great future before him."

Nothing further was said about Bertie, and when Benjamin Freemantle left the Professor's house, he could not help thinking of Gertrude's beauty, and of how suitable a wife she would make for the rising author. That night, over the walnuts and wine, the old man's heart warmed to Bertie.

"The Professor's daughter is a trump card, my boy."

"The Queen of Hearts."

"The Ace. Just the very girl to make a man of you."

"Ah! but, uncle, she has been accustomed to so much style. I couldn't ask her to share my humble lot."

"Don't you stick at that. If the girl loves you she won't mind coming down a bit, at the start, you know. Why, you youngsters can't expect to begin where the old folks end."

"But I'm not sure that she loves me. Besides, in these times, incomes are so uncertain, I've enough to do to pull along in single harness."

"She will succeed to money, and I'm sure

she admires you. Pass the wine, please. Her colour came and went when the Professor and I were discussing your prospects."

"Good gracious! What right, sir, had you to discuss my prospects before her?"

"Now, Bertie, do not get into a fluster about nothing. You'll have to try and curb that nasty temper. It's a dangerous steed on which to ride life's crowded road."

"You're right, uncle," said Bertie, cooling down, and now feeling ashamed of himself. As Gertrude's lover, he was hyper-sensitive about anything that concerned her. "Forgive the explosion of ill-humour."

"There's my hand, Bertie. I think none the less of you for it. Hot young blood is touchy, but I warn you to be on your guard. Now, I must give you some account of my Spanish tour."

Bertie had to submit to a long rambling yarn. When they parted, Benjamin Freemantle informed Bertie that he was leaving Edinburgh next morning for London.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE ON THE ICE

ONE result of Bertie's conversation with his uncle was that he determined to declare his love to Gertrude. He must know his fate. Under the guise of friendship he had paid her a great deal of attention. She had a vague suspicion that he loved her, but, while she confessed to herself that she liked him as a friend, passion slumbered in her gentle breast. The thoughts of love and marriage were not yet awakened. She deemed herself fancy free. She was a fair vessel, carrying what might have been a dangerous spread of spotless white canvas, had she not been well ballasted with brains. At the Graduation Ceremonial, she formed one of the memorable first batch of women to be capped at the Edinburgh University. The cap and gown became this Mistress of Arts. Never had mortar

board rested on a sweeter or nobler brow, and never did academic robe adorn a more graceful form. So thought Bertie, and so also thought many who were privileged to witness the significant ceremony. Bertie knew that Gertrude's attitude towards him was, as yet, only that of a friend. He knew that she admired his talent, but he was not so foolish as to mistake her kindness and enthusiasm for true love, which, when it takes possession of man or woman, holds absolute sway, comes with the peremptory demand,—all or nothing, —and sweeps impetuously before it the lesser affections, including friendship, with its necessary restraints and conventionalities. Love is a tyrant, and the twin brother of jealousy. When he is born he brooks no other rival, and eventually becomes the murderer of friendship. Love, like death, invests life with mystery, expands the limits of existence, and reveals the infinite capacity of human nature for suffering. This is why many a timid maiden shrinks from a joy which she intuitively knows is fraught with such awful possibilities of sorrow.

It was a lovely afternoon in the early autumn. The storm clouds had broken, and the slanting rays of the sun were striking on great masses of vapour which girdled the horizon as it were with snow-capp'd mountains, fantastic battlements, and stupendous towers. Bertie was escorting Gertrude home from Mrs Sheldon's musical party. While he walked by her side he could not keep his eyes off her faultless profile. Gertrude's mind was full of the music she had heard and the dresses she had seen. Bertie's, on the other hand, was dominated by love for the graceful creature at his side. His problem was, how to bring a knowledge of the fact home to the unsuspecting maiden. He knew that, with a girl of her temperament, a false step might irretrievably ruin his chance of success. Just as he revolved the momentous subject in his mind, they turned a corner of the street, and a portion of the sky, hitherto concealed from view, was suddenly disclosed to them. Against a black cloud appeared an exquisite rainbow, the colours of which were startingly vivid.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Gertrude, in-

voluntarily stopping to gaze at the heavenly splendour.

"Lovely!" ejaculated Bertie, his eyes fixed intently on Gertrude.

"Nothing could be finer," protested the Queen of his heart.

"Except the outline of your face," responded Bertie.

Gertrude looked quickly round at him. Her expression changed. Bertie thought,—"now or never"—and there, on the street, confronted by the dark cloud and the rainbow, he uttered the declaration,—"Gertrude, I love you."

The young girl realised the whole situation in an instant. Some heavy drops of rain commenced to fall, and glad of the excuse they so seasonably afforded, she requested Bertie to hail a cab from the cab-stand which they happened to be approaching. He did so. Pale and trembling she stepped into the cab.

"Give the driver my address, please, and leave me," she said to Bertie, who saw with a quaking heart, her extreme distress.

The door was shut, the cab drove off, and he was left standing on the pavement in a state

of miserable suspense,—a spectacle for men and angels. This, he felt, amounted practically to a rejection of his offer of love. What was he to do? Give up the whole thing and drift to destruction. There would be no use attempting to struggle on if Gertrude would not have him. He would become a helpless wreck, without her light to guide him on through the tempestuous sea of life, with its hidden perils, its gloomy uncertainties, and its ever-surging waves of doubt, unrest, and cankering care. That night he abandoned himself to despair.

Gertrude, as she drove home, felt very sad. Her eyes were filled with tears. She had been so happy. Why could Bertie not remain friendly, without troubling her about love? It was a cruel shame. And yet, she pitied him. She pictured his dismay at her abrupt parting. She got a glimpse of him, as he stood in the rain, the very image of an ideal dejected lover. The question came to her,—as it did to him,—what was she to do? When she reached home, she solved the difficulty by writing the following note, which Bertie received next morning.

"George Square,
Edinburgh, *October* 18—.

Dear Mr Heath,—I am sorry for what happened this afternoon. I hasten to apologise for my apparent rudeness in leaving you so abruptly. The truth is, I felt so put about that I scarce knew what I was doing. You have told me that you love me, and it is but fair that I should be frank and tell you, that while I admire you in many ways, I cannot say that my feelings amount to love. In some respects you are an enigma to me. At times I am instinctively afraid of you, and this makes me very uncomfortable. I value your friendship more than I have ever cared to own to myself, till now, and I do hope nothing either of us may have said or done, will be the means of breaking it.—I remain ever, yours sincerely Gertrude Marshall."

The receipt of this letter raised Bertie's drooping spirits. It relit the lamp of hope, and sent him again rejoicing on his way. He told himself he could never be her friend. That was impossible. He would not, how-

ever, be driven away by one refusal. Accordingly the semblance of friendship was resumed. During those autumn and winter months, which succeeded the cab episode, he employed all his arts,—and they were not few,—to ingratiate himself into the favour of Gertrude, and had the inexpressible felicity of seeing her friendship slowly but surely change to love.

Christmas, with its wealth of good cheer, had come and gone, and the New Year dawned bringing with it the grand opportunity of a fresh start in life. Its days were the yet unsullied pages of a volume, in which life's history was to be recorded. Gilbert Heath felt that his evil past leaped like a bloodhound on his track, and dogged his steps into the present. He could not sever himself from the wicked monster within himself, his own creation, any more than he could deny his own identity. One comfort he had. He made a resolution that he would strive to prove himself worthy of Gertrude. As a rule, resolutions are like pie-crust, made to be broken, but Bertie found in the consciousness that his love was reciprocated, a strange power,

enabling him, for the time at least, to act up to the standard he had set himself to attain.

With the New Year came a spell of hard frost, and all the lochs and ponds in the vicinity of the city were crowded with skaters. Gertrude and Bertie had met several times on the ice and arranged to go one night together to Duddingston Loch, by far the finest sheet of water near Edinburgh. It was a glorious evening. The moon shone full-orb'd in clear starlit heavens, shedding a gentle radiance on a scene, romantic in the highest degree. The old tower of the Parish Church at Duddingston village, the tracery of tree branches, and Arthur's Seat, like a lion couching in his majesty, combined to form a picture of unique beauty. Gertrude wore a sealskin toque, a tight-fitting sealskin jacket, and a short black skirt. Ne'er did a daintier figure skim, like a bird, over the smooth ice, a personification of the poetry of motion. The throbbing stars throbbed not as did Bertie's heart. His hands clasped Gertrude's, and in an ecstacy of wild delight, the splendidly

matched pair seemed to fly through the keen air in long sweeping curves. He again ventured to tell her of his abiding passion. She was his. They must never be separated. Gertrude confessed her love, and the hours of bliss, oh, supremest bliss, rushed like moments to beings who had just received life's sweetest crown. Such experiences are sacred and must ever remain isolated from all others amid the heterogeneous experiences of mundane existence.

"Oh, Bertie, dear! it must be getting very late. We should be going."

"One more round, darling, and then we leave."

Her consent was not difficult to obtain.

As they walked back to the city, her hand confidingly resting on his arm, she stopped under the shadow of a precipitous rock, and, drawing Bertie's attention to a star, which scintillated with unusual brilliancy, asked its name.

"That is Sirius," answered Bertie, fondly looking into the depths of a pair of blue eyes far more lustrous than any star.

"It's like a superb diamond," said Gertrude, sighing under her lover's ardent gaze.

"My own, you shall have such a jewel in your engagement ring."

"Bertie, how can you talk of such things, yet. You know we shall have to get father's consent. What will he say to all this?"

"Of course I shall see him to-morrow, and obtain his sanction to our engagement."

"Do you remember the day at the University when I saw you first, and you adopted the *rôle* of my own true knight?"

"Yes, dearest, I will never forget that day, and the tender thanks you conveyed so innocently with your lovely eyes."

"Ah, Bertie! how little we guessed then what happiness lay in store for us."

The sweetest hours come most swiftly to an end, and alas, for the pain when lovers have to part, even for a brief season. As they reached her home in George Square, the idea of separation came over both, and filled them with shadowy fears.

"You will be here early to-morrow? I shall

so weary to see you," said Gertrude, with difficulty restraining her tears.

"Trust me, Gertrude. I hate the thought of leaving you, even for a few hours."

She held out her hand, which he tenderly folded within his own, and, drawing her gently towards him,—he felt that she belonged to him now,—left her with the thrill of a lover's first kiss upon her lips.

CHAPTER VII

DAME FORTUNE TURNS HER WHEEL

PROFESSOR MARSHALL, after breakfast, retired to the study to read the criticism in the newspapers on his recently published Commentary on Justinian's Institutes. He was agreeably employed perusing laudatory paragraphs on his profound work, and was consequently in the best of humour, when Bertie was announced.

"I hope I am not interrupting you, coming in at this early hour," said Bertie, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"Not at all. How are you, Mr Heath? I'm just skimming some of the articles that have appeared in the papers, on my book."

"That must be pleasant work. I read a few of the notices this morning. They were all most favourable. I congratulate you heartily."

"Thank you. I put a world of labour and research into my Commentary. No one will ever know what it has cost me, but it is accomplished now. I am glad I have been able to finish it. At one time I feared my failing health would compel me to abandon it altogether."

"The reason why I have called to see you this morning," said Bertie, determined to take the plunge without any undue delay, "is to ask your consent to my engagement to your daughter."

A cloud passed over the Professor's face. His features suddenly swung round from "set fair" to "change." Bertie did not like the disturbance.

"I don't quite understand what you mean, Mr Heath."

"The truth is, Gertrude and I are in love with each other, and wish to be plighted. I arranged to come early this morning and get your consent."

"All this is so sudden. Gertrude has told me nothing about it. Really you disconcert me more than I can tell."

Here the facial barometer indicated "stormy." Bertie knew he would have to look out for squalls.

"I'm sorry, Professor Marshall, that you should take it in this way. I have long loved your daughter——"

"But," interrupted the fond parent, beginning to get angry, "you are not in a position yet to be engaged to Gertrude. I see no reasonable prospect of your being able to marry within the next ten years. Besides, I don't want to lose my daughter, and, in any case, I do not approve of long engagements."

"It is quite true," explained Bertie, apologetically, "that I may not be in a position to marry at present, but I believe my prospects are good."

"You have no income secured to you in the meantime," fretted the Professor, "and, during my lifetime, I do not intend to settle anything on my daughter, should she be foolish enough to marry without my consent."

"I can insure my life."

"I don't believe in insurance," fumed the

indignant savant. "Mr Heath, I beg you will give me time to consider this matter. Meanwhile, I cannot give my consent to the engagement."

"May I inform Miss Marshall of this?" asked Bertie, in the depths of despair, and feeling wretched, because he knew he was regarded in the light of a poverty-stricken adventurer.

The Professor noted his dejected aspect, and judged he had been perhaps too severe with the young man.

"Let me see. Forgive me, Mr Heath, if I've said anything hasty. This affair has quite upset me. Confound it all. An only child, and a daughter, is a curse instead of a blessing. You don't know what it is to be a father. A world of affection is wasted, and then, when the baggage comes to have a will of her own, she hives off, and leaves her old father—desolate."

The Professor did love his daughter after his own grim fashion.

"We could live near you," observed Bertie, noticing that the old man's countenance was

becoming softer in expression, "and Gertrude would be with you as much as you pleased."

"I must have time to think this matter over, Mr Heath. I suppose Gertrude expects to see you? Now I put you on your honour as a gentleman, you will break the knowledge of my wishes gently to her, and both try to take a reasonable view of the situation."

Bertie left the study and found Gertrude in the drawing-room. She was dressed in a plain tweed gown, and, though pale, looked surpassingly beautiful. She had been rehearsing their meeting that morning over and over again in her mind. She expected that Bertie would run to meet her, fold her in his arms, and claim her as his own for ever. Instead of that, he hung back, looking a picture of woe, and uttered not a single word. At last he walked to a couch, and, sitting down, covered his face with his hands.

"Oh, Bertie! what has happened?" cried Gertrude in alarm, the tears springing to her lovely eyes.

"Gertrude, forgive me. I'm quite unmanned."

"Has father refused his consent?"

"That does not trouble me so much, as the suspicion that haunts me."

"Do tell me what it is," pleaded Gertrude.

"I don't believe he thinks me worthy of you, and neither I am."

"Is that all? Why, what does it matter so long as I think you worthy, dearest?"

Here the fair young girl sat down beside her lover, and put her arms round him, as if to assure him of her devotion and protection from every harm, supposed or real.

"What I ought to have said, love, was this, —your father wishes time to consider the matter of our engagement. He thinks my position is not yet adequately secured, and I daresay he is right."

"How can you say such things, Bertie? We are engaged already. Nothing can ever alter that. We will not act rashly, and it will be sweet to wait, when we know we are doing the right thing."

"My brave girl, you comfort me. I have acted the part of a veritable baby."

Approaching footsteps were heard. The Professor entered. Love's culprits rose, and there was an awkward pause. The Professor was the first to speak.

"Gertrude, my dear, I suppose Mr Heath has told you that I suggest the prudent course, and I do hope you acquiesce in my wishes."

"We will be dutiful," said Gertrude, laying her hand on her father's arm, and raising tearful eyes to his face.

"I shall strive to make myself worthy of Gertrude," said Bertie, with difficulty suppressing a rising tempest of resentment. "We have resolved to abide your decision."

The Professor seemed pleased that things had gone so smoothly. He fully expected a scene.

"I am glad," he remarked, rubbing his hands with invisible soap, "you both take a reasonable view of the situation. The whole thing was so unexpected, that I really felt I must act with deliberation. In critical

moments of life, it is always best to call in the aid of sure-footed Philosophy."

The Professor thought himself bright and happy in his shrewd advice.

Bertie mentally ejaculated, — "Hang up Philosophy, unless Philosophy can make a Juliet," and of course for "Juliet" he read "Gertrude."

Gertrude judged it a world fraught with mystery and tragedy,—a world in which the shadows chase the sunshine, as on the hillside in an April day,—a strange world, where the advent of love brings with it not only singing and gladness, but sighing and sadness, a heart at one moment bounding with joy, and at another, feeling as if it were ready to break with sorrow.

Duty and discipline are never so uncomely as when, like grim visaged duennas, they walk on both sides of a young and beautiful maiden, preventing her from realising love's fair dream. The maiden's cry is for freedom, for a life away from the city, with its artificial social restraints, its hollow conventionalities, its worship at the shrines of fashion and mammon.

Oh, at such times, for a return to pastoral simplicity, to the cottage life amid the flowers, where the constant worry about ways and means, the keeping up of so much style, the doing in Rome as the Romans do, would be for ever dispensed with, and the idyllic, Arcadian life, be translated into fact.

Bertie withdrew, and left Gertrude a chaos of hopes and fears. He sought his study, and attempted to write, but his brain would not respond, when cudgelled. He became a prey to all sorts of gloomy forebodings. It seemed to him that he had made a mistake in quitting the legal profession. His father was quite right, after all. Will-o'-the-wisp ambition had lured him on, tempting him to leave solid ground, and now he was sinking in a quagmire. His literary success had been won by dishonourable means. The crime must certainly be discovered, and then his doom would be sealed.

A telegram was placed in his hands. He tore open the envelope, and read as follows :—

"To Gilbert Heath, 96 Castle Street, Edinburgh.

"Benjamin Freemantle died suddenly this morning. Letter by first mail. Rooker."

Poor Uncle Benjamin! A kindly soul! Bertie mused sorrowfully on the memory of his dead uncle. Benjamin Freemantle had been one of those who showed faith in him and in the choice which he had made. No more Continental tours. No more opportune cheques. If Bertie had but known the truth, realised that he was now a wealthy man, he would have dashed from the house, bought the engagement ring, and flown to the arms of Gertrude, with the entreaty to consent to an early wedding. As it was, the sad news only added to his embarrassment. It made him feel that he had lost one of the few friends in time of need, still left to him, and it set him puzzling his brains how he could afford the extra expense connected with his uncle's death, involving as it did, a journey to London.

Next morning the promised letter arrived from Dr Freemantle's solicitors.

"GREAT GEORGE STREET, WESTMINSTER,
LONDON,—*January* 18—.

DEAR SIR,—We wired you to-day of the sudden death, from heart disease, of your uncle, Dr Benjamin Freemantle. His settlements and other papers are in our custody, and we hasten to advise you that you have been nominated sole Residuary Legatee. The real and personal estate, which belonged to your uncle, is of large amount. We cannot, as yet, give you the exact figures, but we have prepared, and enclose herewith, a rough estimate, from which you will see that, after making provision for outstanding claims, annuities, several legacies, and the costs of administration, the residue of his estate will amount to about £95,996,—We remain, Yours faithfully, ROOKER & SALT."

It is recorded of a great artist, that, unable to depict overwhelming sorrow, he drew the similitude of a veil over the face. It would be difficult to describe the tumult which the receipt of this letter created in Bertie's breast, and perhaps, therefore, it is wisest, imitating

the example of the great artist, to draw the veil of discreet silence over the emotions that surged within Bertie, on his learning how munificent old Uncle Freemantle had been.

CHAPTER VIII

A LITERARY SAMPLE

AMONG the sights, which no visitor to Scotia's spiry Capital should fail to see, are the Supreme Courts of Justice, and the grand old Parliament Hall. There, during the Sittings of the Courts, will be found representatives of all classes in the legal profession. As in the Church, where the hierarchic principle prevails, are to be met with various ranks, from the poor struggling Curate, to the lordly Bishop and princely Archbishop, so, in the learned profession of the Law are to be found diverse grades, from the necessity driven copying Clerk, and petti-fogging Solicitor, to the serene Judge on the Bench. The gulf which separates these ends of the legal pole is bridged by Notaries, Law Agents, Solicitors before the Supreme Courts, Writers to Her Majesty's Signet, Clerks to the

Signet, and members of the Faculty of Advocates,— comprising Juniors, Seniors, Sheriff Substitutes, Sheriffs, Queen's Counsel, Dean of Faculty, Solicitor General, and Lord Advocate,—a motley throng, maintained, in a great measure, by a nation prone to litigation. The College of Justice, as the collection of Courts is called, — consisting of Outer and Inner Houses, being the ordinary and appeal Courts in Civil Causes, together with the Justiciary Court, which is the supreme tribunal in criminal Suits, along with the numerous Circuit and Sheriff Courts throughout the country,—forms an administrative institution of which Scotland may well be proud. In the ancient Scottish Parliament Hall, ample opportunity is afforded for the study of male human nature. There, during Session, representatives of every branch of the College of Justice can be seen. Few women are to be met with, either in the Hall or adjacent Courts, except, indeed, an occasional visitor led thither by curiosity, or attracted, perhaps, by some sensational trial. Should a great murder trial be in progress, then a woman, in

these regions, is no longer looked upon as a *rara avis.* At such a time morbid inquisitiveness draws beauty and fashion within the sacred precincts, where a stringent male monopoly reigns. Stately matrons, attired in all the splendour befitting their social rank, gentle and even timid looking maidens, daintily dressed, as if for a festive entertainment, may be seen crowding the benches of the High Court of Justiciary, and for what purpose? To satisfy the craving, inherent in human nature, for excitement. Anything melodramatic or tragic exercises a powerful sway over the imagination. To gaze on the Judge in his striking robes, to gloat over the haggard wretch in the dock, charged with the most awful of crimes, to listen to evidence, which brings to light harrowing and sickening details, to realise that life is at stake, that the Jury may bring in a verdict of "Guilty," and that the Judge may have to pronounce the terrible sentence of doom,—all these things enthral the attention, and awaken interest in its keenest and intensest form. This is why celebrated Criminal Trials will always be

patronised by the fair sex. It is because they minister to the emotional side of feminine nature, exactly in the same manner as do the theatre and the sensational novel.

As a rule, the boards of the Scottish Parliament Hall are perambulated mainly by members of the Wig and Gown fraternity, in company with the Agents who employ them. These pace to and fro, discussing Cases in which they are interested, and commenting on the political situation. Among the Faculty of Advocates are men, remarkable alike for splendid physique and brilliant intellect. The Faculty constitutes the most aristocratic branch of the profession, and, as a natural result, it attracts to itself men of wealth and position. The facilities which it offers to those whose inclinations are social and literary, make the honour of being enrolled among its members a coveted one, and so it has come to pass that many hover about the Halls of Justice who are better known in the Republic of Letters than for anything they have accomplished at the Bar. Mr Austen Lawrie was one of these. A

shrewd enough lawyer, yet somehow not popular, perhaps because it became known that his heart was more in literary than legal work. He was a much esteemed reviewer in several of the Quarterlies, and noted both for the niceness of his critical judgment and the uniform fairness with which he exercised it. He entertained a high ideal of the function of criticism. When the Court of Session was sitting, he would generally be found up at the Parliament House, in the library, reading-room, corridor, or walking the boards of the Hall. He was the centre of a select literary coterie. His most intimate friend was Sheriff Ableson, a big, dreamy, lumbering kind of man. The Sheriff, an omnivorous reader, never put pen to paper unless absolutely forced to do so by the exigencies of business; but he was a good listener, and, when he did venture a remark, it was apposite to the topic on the *tapis*. These two friends met one morning in the crowded Parliament Hall.

"Anything fresh on the Rialto?" asked Austen Lawrie, briskly.

"Nothing, except the weather," answered Sheriff Ableson, with a ponderous smile.

Lawrie took Ableson's arm, confidentially, and said, as they paced with measured steps the oaken floor:

"I've got a special batch of books to review for the "Onlooker," and there is one which has been exercising my mind a good deal lately,—a work on Italian Art by a young author named Gilbert Heath."

"I know the book. It has been greatly praised. I read it quite recently."

"And what do you think of it?"

"Good, very good for a young man. It is not a book of even merit. Much of it is carelessly written, but it contains passages of extraordinary power and beauty."

"Now you interest me. How do you account for the inequalities?"

"I suppose they indicate a fault incident to youth and inexperience."

"In some cases, no doubt, but not here."

"What is your theory then?"

"I believe the explanation is, that many brilliant passages in the book are plagiarised."

"A charge of plagiarism is a serious matter."

"Undoubtedly, but I feel pretty sure of my ground, and I intend to deal boldly with the author, and do what I conceive to be the critic's duty unflinchingly."

"Of course you know that such a charge, unsubstantiated, lays you open to an action for damages."

"I am well aware of that. The crime of plagiarism, however, is becoming far too common. It is time for the critic to use the knife unsparingly. Examples must be made, else this widespread sin of a literary age will never be eradicated. The sad thing is, that the Clergy are among the worst sinners in the matter of plagiarism. They palm off portions of other men's sermons and thoughts culled from various sources as their own, and, when the crime is brought home, punishment takes the ridiculously mild form of censure by the Church Courts. A poor ignorant woman steals a turnip from a field, driven perhaps to the act by want, and she gets a month's imprisonment. A man, who

has received a University education, has graduated, and makes an open profession of Christianity, steals the fruit of another man's brain, incorporates it in his sermon, and, when discovered, he is admonished by his brethren, and merely requested to apologise."

"The thing is not right, but remember this, Lawrie, what you suppose to be a case of plagiarism, may turn out to be only correspondence of thought between two kindred minds."

"In some instances, I grant you, but not here. I am persuaded I have got on the track of a genuine plagiarism, and I must expose it."

"Who is this Gilbert Heath?"

"I don't know, but certainly he makes great pretensions. Come with me to the Corridor, and I will read you one of the passages I feel quite sure was never written by Gilbert Heath, and, after I have read it, I shall leave you to guess the real author's name."

Austen Lawrie led Sheriff Ableson to a desk in a quiet nook of the Corridor con-

nected with the Advocates' Library, and read, from Gilbert Heath's book, the following, somewhat lengthy passage.

"One of the pitifullest features of this age is the attitude assumed by many of the pigmies of to-day. We are pigmies compared with the giants of past centuries. We, of the Nineteenth Century, have puffed ourselves up with detestable pride, and boast of our scientific discoveries, our inventions, and our social progress. We proclaim, with our thousand broad sheets of steam printed lies, that we are the people, and that wisdom shall die with us. What is the justification for this miserablest of positions we have adopted,—a position which effectually bars the avenues to true progress, and blinds us to our best and highest good? The proud answer comes, — we have discovered the properties of steam and electricity, we have formulated the doctrine of evolution, and we have brought to perfection the science of political economy. Is the world going to be regenerated by steam and electricity, by rapid motion, and by ever increasingly complicated

machinery? And what of the crowning discovery of a so-called scientific era, that of the principle of evolution? Lo! Ye scientists of the bat and owl species, man is found to be the descendant of the brutes, and claims kinship with apes. Will the spirit which gives birth to such a theory be a likely spirit to foster sciences and arts that will enoble man's view of the race to which he belongs, or of God, who called him into being by an effort of creative will-force? Alas! With loss of faith in a human ancestry, has come belief in many forms of materialism, and practical atheism has fostered indifference to the higher life,—men being content to live on the plane of a gross utilitarianism. One result is, that the Fine Arts in our day have degenerated. The decay of original creative power, of which the degeneration is a sure symptom, has laid the foundations of a dark age with the advent of the Twentieth Century. The best and most hopeful movements of the Nineteenth Century have been backward, as for example the Oxford movement, headed by Newman,—a return to the doctrines and

practices of the Patristic Christian Church; and the Pre-Raphælite movement, headed by Millais, Holman Hunt, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, which was virtually a revival of the simplicity and purity of the art of the Sixteenth Century. The dwarf of to-day starts up indignantly at such an assertion. Nevertheless it is the Sixteenth, and not the Nineteenth Century, which is the greatest in the annals of history.

"As regards painting, I think I have made this truth abundantly clear in the chapters dealing with the second period of great Italian painters, since it was the Sixteenth Century which produced Lionardo da Vinci, Michæl Angelo, Raphæl, Corregio, Giorgione, Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, and the three Caracci (Louis, Augustus, and Hannibal), men whose works I have endeavoured to describe and interpret in these pages,—men who have made Italy the final Court of Appeal in matters relating to the painter's art.

"The Sixteenth was the Century *par excellence* of renaissance, reformation, revolution,

and unprecedented achievement. It was the age that produced Shakespeare, with his miraculous poetry in dramatic form; Cervantes, with his immortal Don Quixote; and Rabelais, with his unapproachable humour. It was the era of Luther, Calvin, and Knox, the giants in ecclesiastical reform. During that wonderful period flourished such men as Albrecht Durer, Holbein, Ariosto, Camoens, Tasso, Ben Jonson, Spencer, and Paracelsus. The Sixteenth Century, moreover, marks the period when, through the genius of Columbus, the new world was discovered to the old. The discovery brought with it mental expansion. Men's hearts were filled with jubilant expectations. Vast and splendid visions floated before their imaginations, nor were these disappointed, when the reality became manifest. The spirit of daring and adventure was fostered in an extraordinary degree. British sea dogs, as the famous ship captains were called, roved over the oceans making conquests, and bringing treasure to the mother country. They also brought accounts of strange lands, wonderful sights, and thrill-

ing incidents. The practical outcome of this brave and independent policy on the part of our sailors was, that, with the defeat and destruction of the Spanish Armada, Britain won the maritime supremacy, which is hers to this day, — a supremacy upon which is based her colonial empire and commercial prosperity.

"The Sixteenth Century not only saw men's ideas of the habitable globe expand, by the discovery of fresh continents, but it witnessed the greatest revolution Astronomy has ever undergone. This was the overthrow of the Ptolemaic System by the publication of the *opus magnum* of Copernicus entitled, '*De Revolutionibus Orbium Cœlestium.*' In this marvellous work, our earth was relegated to its proper place, the sun was proclaimed the '*centrum mundi*,' and round its glorious orb our planet, and the other planets of the solar system were proved to revolve. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this discovery in its bearings on Astronomy and Physical Science generally.

"The same Century also produced Lord

Bacon, whose '*Novum Organum*' entitled him to be called the father of experimental or inductive philosophy. As the discovery of Copernicus superseded the Ptolemaic System, so did the Baconian method supplant the Aristotelian, and pave the way for the progressive march of the arts and sciences.

"We cannot but connect the unique development of Italian art, during the Sixteenth Century, with these movements and changes of which a slight sketch has been given. At the same time, we must not fail to note the curious fact that, while the Sixteenth Century stands out pre-eminently among the centuries, no one period, and no single nation excel in all the supreme things. The ancient, mediæval, and modern eras have each brought their contributions, and the Courts of Appeal, therefore, belong to various times and races. To the Jew we must go in matters pertaining to religion,—to the Greek in those pertaining to philosophy, sculpture, and oratory,—to the Roman in those conversant with jurisprudence,—to the Briton in those relating to

poetry, the drama, and the novel, that prose epic, the legitimate development of which the Nineteenth Century has witnessed,—to the Italian in those relating to painting,—to the German in those relating to music, the flood mark in which was not attained till the advent of the Eighteenth Century, which produced Mozart, Handel, and Beethoven,—and to the Frenchman in those relating to comedy, the world's greatest dramatist, in the domain of pure comedy, being Moliere.

"I must now give you, my reader, a critical estimate of the sublimest creations——"

"Pardon me," interrupted Sheriff Ableson, beginning to get tired of Mr Austen Lawrie's long quotations from Gilbert Heath's book, "you need not read more. A name suggests itself to my mind."

"What name?" asked Lawrie eagerly.

"That of Thomas Rushworth."

"Exactly."

"There are similarities of style."

"Yes, and correspondences in thought. I can give parallel paragraphs."

"Be merciful to your victim."

"Justice demands truth at the critic's hands."

"The book may serve useful ends, even although portions of it have been plagiarised."

"A public example must be made. The effect will be salutary."

"Season mercy with justice in your review. Don't be too harsh with the young author. He may be struggling with poverty, for all you know."

"You wish to turn me from a plain duty."

"No, Lawrie, but, in a case of this kind, I would have you act with caution and moderation. The pen, especially the critic's pen, is mightier than the sword. By a few words a man's literary reputation may be slain. I have often thought that the true function of criticism is praise. It seems to me that where the critic cannot honestly praise, silence is better than blame."

"I don't agree with you. Crime ought to be exposed at all costs."

The two friends parted, the one to hunt up some obscure points of law, the other to write his trenchant criticism.

CHAPTER IX

TREASURE IN DANGER

BERTIE was left in the embrace of Dame Fortune, innocent as a babe of the storm that was brewing in the ancient Parliament House. His condition was pretty much that of the 'Bus conductor, who, when told that he had succeeded to a modest competency, dashed his pipe to the ground and exclaimed, —"No more clay pipes, nothing but cigars!" His mind revelled in grand schemes. Life's rough road would be made to appear smooth through the agency of the gold springs. There would be an end to all the disagreeable jolting. Then the thought of Gertrude rushed in upon him, and he started up and hurried forth from his abode. At once he assumed the *rôle* of the imperious lover. He purchased a magnificent diamond gipsy ring, in which was imprisoned a flashing Sirius, and drove

with all speed to George Square. He found Gertrude alone.

"My own love," he said, "I am the bearer of good and bad news."

"Oh, Bertie!" exclaimed the fair woman, in a state of agitated suspense, raising her hands and pressing them to her heart to still its wild beating.

"I am richer and poorer, since last we met."

"Please do not speak so enigmatically," pled Gertrude, looking tearfully at her lover.

"My sweet one, I pain you." Bertie caught her in his arms and strained her to his breast.

"You do, dearest. It is cruel of you to keep me in suspense."

"Well, then, to be quite plain, Gertrude, darling, I am now wealthy. Uncle Freemantle is dead, and he has named me his residuary legatee."

"I am so glad, for your sake, you are rich, Bertie; but your poor uncle?"

"He died suddenly of heart disease."

"Alas! He was a good man, and he believed in you."

"I know he did, and I bless his memory for it.—Gertrude."

"Yes, dear. What is it?"

"I have come to claim you, I must now obtain your father's consent to our engagement. Is he in the study?"

"I think so."

"I will go and see him, and return in a few moments."

So saying, Bertie went to the study, and had a talk with the Professor, who saw matters in a new light, now that the poor struggling author had been transformed into the man of means. He not only consented to the engagement, but also to an early wedding. Gertrude read joy in Bertie's face when he returned to the drawing-room. His air was decidedly imperial. When he spoke, it was to make a demand.

"Give me you hand, Gertrude."

"With all my heart," responded the young girl. A smile lit up her face, in which the bliss of surrender mingled with the happiness of true love. She gave her right hand. Bertie took it and pressed it to his lips.

"Now give me your other hand, sweetheart."

Gertrude yielded it up also, and Bertie slipped the ring, fit for a princess, on her engagement finger.

"Oh!" was all he got for thanks from the delighted and astonished maid.

"What does it remind you of, dearest?"

"Can you ask? Bertie does such joy ever fall to the lot of other mortals in this world?"

"I'm inclined to question it."

"Did my father consent quite readily to our engagement?"

"Yes, and to an early wedding. Name the glad day."

Gertrude blushed, she did not know why. It was so sweet to be engaged. Could they not, she thought, remain betrothed to each other for a long time yet? Was it not premature to talk of marriage? To be wedded soon, would be like being hurried from one banquet to another, before the first was fully and adequately enjoyed. She ventured the remark,—

"It seems a little ungrateful in us, does it

not, to think of marrying, considering your uncle is just dead?"

"I daresay you are right. I shall not ask you to decide this question, till after my return from London."

"You are not going to your uncle's funeral, are you?"

"I go to-day."

"Oh! I cannot bear the thought of separation. Your family will be well represented. Say you will not go."

"Now, Gertrude, do be reasonable. I shall not be long away. It would never do if the Residuary Legatee were absent on such an occasion."

"I shall be a bundle of misery when you are gone."

"My pet, and think you that I shall be happy exiled from my only treasure?"

"Men have so many things to distract their attention; but poor women live in the sphere of their affections. Love, when it takes possession of us, is our one world. I used to think differently, but now, I confess my mistake."

"Promise me, you will try and bear up, for my sake?"

"I will, beloved, but it is very hard."

When Bertie departed, Gertrude became, as she predicted, a bundle of misery. Her mind was full of nameless fears. Unbidden tears started from a fountain, the depth of which, till now, she had never even suspected. At one time in her life she worked energetically in the woman's cause, and fondly pictured to herself a life of independence and activity. Now she had come to realise that the woman's cause is man's. Once she believed in George Meredith, and his championship of her sex. Diana of the Crossways was one of her heroines, and she emphatically maintained herself to be a fair lady in revolt. She vowed that her life would never terminate as did Tennyson's Princess Ida. This was her position in the merry, careless days, but love laughs at such as she. He knows he can bide his time, and when the heart is ripe for his arrow it flies from his bow, and the overthrow of all former cherished schemes and ambitions is complete. Gertrude was by no means recon-

ciled to the change that had come over her, yet she knew that, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow accompanying the new life, she would not have it otherwise. Bertie wished her to consent to an early wedding, and he had gone from her to a funeral. Her thoughts alternated between a funeral and a wedding. They have much in common. They are the great events in life, which solemnise it, deepen it, and give it its character of romance and mystery. A funeral is the wedding of dust with dust, of spirit with kindred spirit ; and a wedding is the funeral of the virgin state. Both are beginnings, as well as endings. At both there are gatherings of relatives and friends, as on no other occasion ; bells are rung, tears shed, prayers offered, flowers give their beauty and waft their fragrance, and music and poetry lend their gracious aid. The symbols are the same, only on the different occasions they express different sentiments. At a funeral they all betoken grief. The bells are tolled, tears are wrung from broken hearts, prayers are uttered between pitiful sobs, white flowers

are woven into emblems, such as the cross, to denote faith, the anchor, hope, and the wreath, triumph over suffering and death in a life beyond the grave; the music takes the form of a requiem or a mournful march, and the song is a dirge. At a wedding these symbols become the evidence of gladness. Joy bells peal through the air, tears are the witnesses to a hidden treasure-house of love and tenderest sensibility, prayers are the incense of thankfulness, flowers,—decking bride and bridesmaids, — proclaim their own bridal language, music is a melodious outburst of praise in a major key, and the poet graces the nuptials with his epithalamium.

During Bertie's absence, Gertrude had strange experiences. Her sleep was broken by dreams. Now she saw a long line of mourners, she thought her love was dead, and woke with a sudden start, to find that she had been weeping. Then she would compose herself to sleep, at peace because it was a dream, and dream again. This time it was a marriage feast and she was the bride, and her bridegroom sat beside her, looking so hand-

some. She would waken from this vision in an ecstasy of delight, and, realising her lonely state, and the fact that her lover was far away, would shed bitter tears and wish to dream again.

As Gertrude lay awake one night, her heart palpitating from the effect of a disagreeable phantasm, her attention was suddenly arrested by the sound of knocking in the room immediately below her bedroom. The sound proceeded from the breakfast-room, situated at the back of the house, opposite to her father's study. What could it be? All else was quiet. She listened eagerly. The knocking continued at irregular intervals, and at last she could decern a hoarse murmur as of men's voices. This was no dream, and Gertrude, in her waking moments, and in matters unconnected with her lover, was a brave woman. She got up, threw on her dressing-gown, and lit a taper. Then she went softly to her maid, who slept in an adjoining room, and, wakening her, told her she feared something was wrong downstairs. She felt sorry, immediately afterwards, that

she had done this, for Betsy was a timid girl and showed a tendency to scream and go into hysterics. Gertrude next sped to her father, and informed him she suspected burglars had broken into the house, and were at work in the breakfast-room. The Professor dressed hurriedly. His first thoughts were of his manuscripts,—his precious manuscripts. The pleasure of life would be gone for him if these priceless treasures were carried off. His brave daughter was an after-thought. He wanted to rush wildly down the stairs and confront the robbers. Perhaps he and Gertrude, had he got his way, would have been killed on the spot. Gertrude restrained him, however, and whispered her plan. It met, fortunately, with the Professor's approval. They both went noiselessly to the front door, unbolted it, and the Professor ran forth in search of a policeman, while Gertrude kept guard at the open door. Betsy hung about the stair, her face whiter than her very night-gown. The other servants were not roused. As she kept watch, Gertrude could hear that the burglars were busily at work. The door

of the breakfast-room was locked on the outside, and they had commenced to cut a hole in its panel, nearest the keyhole, in order to get at the key. Their object, doubtless, was to proceed to the dining-room, where the plate chest stood. The Professor returned in a brief space of time with a stalwart policeman who stupidly stumbled on the doorstep thus giving the burglars the alarm. The Professor sprang forward, and unlocking the door of the breakfast-room, burst in, followed by the policeman. There was a scuffling of feet. One man made his escape by the window, while another stood at his side with a lantern. The Professor lost not a moment, and laid hold of the miscreant, but was shaken violently off. He closed again with the villain, and, in the struggle which ensued, the lantern fell to the ground. The burglar, with a savage oath, aimed a blow at the Professor's head, with a stick which he held in his hand. The Professor raised his arm in self-defence, but had not sufficient strength to ward off the blow, though he succeeded in modifying its force. He staggered backwards, feeling

stunned. The robber, meantime, effected his escape by the window, as his accomplice had done. The policeman did not show much alacrity in pursuing the retreating men. The whole household was now in an uproar. Lights were brought in, and the scene of the outrage scrutinised. Luckily the breakfast-room did not contain any articles of value. The only thing which had been tampered with was a desk containing nothing of importance. It had been roughly broken open, and its contents strewn on the floor. The Professor then went to his study. All was safe there. The great ebony cabinet, in a drawer of which were his most prized earthly treasures, stood untouched. He heaved a sigh of relief, and registered a silent vow that he would devise some means whereby they might be rendered doubly secure from profane hands. Gertrude followed her father into his *sanctum*, and observed, with alarm, that he had received a slight wound in his forehead.

"Father, dear, you are hurt."

"Only a scratch, my child. We must all

retire to rest again. That night constable has been of very little use to us."

It was a melodramic incident in modern life. Gertrude, when recounting it afterwards to Pauline, remarked that it was such an incident as one might expect to meet with in a story of the penny dreadful type, but certainly not one easily to be credited in real life.

CHAPTER X

A WEDDING AND A HONEYMOON

GERTRUDE, on being asked by Bertie to name their wedding day, fixed upon one in the leafy month of June. A large circle of relatives and friends anticipated the event with kindly interest. A period of welcome excitement and pleasurable surprise, for both the prospective bride and bridegroom, intervened betwixt the announcement and celebration of the nuptials, a period in which so much had to be done, and so many arrangements required to be made. Gertrude's home began to be deluged with presents. To all appearance a fancy fair, on an unusually superb scale, was about to be held in the Professor's house.

Gertrude decided that she would be content with only two bridesmaids, Pauline Sheldon and Hilda M'Intosh,—dark and fair beauties.

Archibald Grierson consented to be best man. A reconciliation was effected between Bertie and his father, and there was the promise that nothing would mar the happiness of Gertrude, —the blue-eyed,—on her marriage day. The promise was not belied in any respect. The day dawned rosy in the east, and unbroken sunshine reigned throughout its memorable hours. George Square, associated as it is with the Wizard of the North,—the immortal Sir Walter Scott,—never looked so gay, while carriage after carriage arrived at Professor Marshall's residence, freighted with exquisitely attired ladies and fashionably dressed men. The marriage, with fitting ceremonial, had been solemnised in St Giles' Cathedral, in presence of a large congregation, — and a select company thereafter assembled to partake of the Professor's hospitality. Gertrude's father bore up wonderfully well. Not till that day did he realise how much he had parted with, in giving away his daughter. He assumed an air of hilarity, which he was far from feeling. In a light bantering way he employed language to conceal thought,

and the smile on his patrician face was a mask hiding the pain that gnawed at his heart.

"This has been a proud day," said Sir Edwin Lloyd to him.

"Yes, but what of to-morrow? I shall be as lonely as yourself, Sir Edwin. I think it will be necessary for me to come and stay with you."

"Not a bad idea. I have a better plan than that, though. You might accompany me to Berlin. Where are the young couple to spend their honeymoon?"

"That's a profound secret, Sir Edwin, but *entre nous*, they propose going to the Swiss Lakes."

"Sensible pair."

"That plan of yours would suit me exactly. I have a long standing invitation from Professor Switzguebel, the distinguished Civilian at Berlin. When do you start?"

"This day fortnight."

"Admirable. I shall arrange for Gertrude and her husband picking me up on their way

home. Here is Mr Heath. We will take him into our confidence, and furnish him with addresses."

Bertie thought the idea a good one, and promised to visit Berlin. He had never been there, and relished the prospect of a promenade "*Unter den Linden.*"

While Bertie discussed the proposed Berlin trip with his father-in-law, his wife was engaged, in another part of the room, holding converse with her bridesmaids.

"Gertrude, you will write to me sometimes, when you are abroad," said Pauline.

"Yes, dear. Nice long letters."

"I don't expect them to be long letters. Your time will be too much occupied, but a word now and then will be welcome."

"Shall I forward you the Reports of the proceedings at the Women's Emancipation League, when they are published?" enquired Hilda M'Intosh, with a satirical smile.

"Oh, you wicked girl. You think I will cease to take any further interest in the Society, now that I am married. I'm not so sure about that. Of course I may not attend

the meetings as I used to do. Perhaps some day I shall be one of your most eloquent members, but——"

"Meanwhile I can strike your name off the roll. That's always the way in a woman's camp. There is no end of excuse for playing the traitress," said Hilda, stamping her little satin slippered foot on the carpet, and trying to look aggrieved.

"Fie, fie, Hilda!" exclaimed Pauline, "you must not call Gertrude a traitress. You don't know how soon you may prove one yourself."

"Quite right, Pauline. Pitch into her," laughed Gertrude.

Mr Grierson joined the group at this moment, and Gertrude, turning to him asked,—

"Do you think a married woman should be branded as a traitress, because she ceases to take so keen an interest in the movement for the so-called emancipation of her sex?"

"It all depends," answered Grierson, glancing at Pauline, whose eyelids instantly drooped on her dark lustrous eyes, while a blush o'erspread her cheeks. She bit her lips, vexed that she should have betrayed her conscious-

ness of the admiration with which the "best man" regarded her.

"Do you mean that it all depends whether a husband will allow his wife to take part in matters outside the domestic sphere?" enquired the pert Hilda, noticing Pauline's confusion.

"I did not infer a husband's interference at all in the matter," said Grierson, good-humouredly, "I merely meant that there comes, to most women, a time when other interests naturally supplant the one you advocate so enthusiastically, Miss M'Intosh. Love, for example, may so revolutionise a woman's views, that, of her own accord, and without laying herself open to the charge of being a traitress, she may withdraw from movements which previously she cordially patronised."

Hilda thought Mr Grierson's explanation singularly involved and pedantic. Truth to tell, his utterance was priggish in tone. It must be remembered, however, that Hilda's judgment may have been warped, since Mr Grierson rather neglected her, he was so

engrossed paying court to the captivating Pauline. He had that day fallen in love with Pauline Sheldon, and they eventually became man and wife. It should be recorded that Pauline underwent the same change, in regard to the woman's emancipation Cause, as did Gertrude, and that Hilda, who acted in the capacity of bridesmaid at Pauline's wedding also, then spoke more bitterly than ever against man,—the arch enemy of woman.

Mrs Sheldon came forward, while Hilda vainly endeavoured to convince Mr Grierson of the error of his ways, and reminded Gertrude that it was time to prepare for her journey. The two quietly withdrew.

The bridal dress, the cloudy veil, the wreath of orange blossom and myrtle, the fragrant bouquet, the tiny satin shoes, and all the fairy-like garments of the bride were laid aside, and she donned a simple travelling gown. She soon stepped forth, one of the neatest and loveliest little tourists that ever leaned on manly arm.

The happiest day is not without its ordeals. Gertrude felt keenly parting from her father.

She afterwards declared that, except the pathetic "God bless you," spoken by parental lips, plunging her suddenly in a flood of emotion, she remembered nothing more, till she and Bertie were well on in their journey. A great wave of feeling sometimes obliterates a mass of trifling incidents, and causes the person who experiences it to be oblivious to what might otherwise have afforded interest and amusement.

Honeymoon! What writer can ever hope adequately to tell a tithe that the magic word implies. For Gertrude it meant the sweetest time she ever spent. Bertie was full of solicitude for her welfare. He too was in a blissful state. The memory of an evil past did creep occasionally, like a serpent, into his Eden, but he had an antidote for its poisonous sting,—the consciousness that he hated his wicked conduct, and the moral support derived from resolutions for amendment as yet unbroken.

At Lucerne, the dream-like beauty of lake and mountain, the clear atmosphere, the bright sky, the ever varying colours, and all the paradisal splendours of one of the fairest spots

in a fair world, were as a fitting framework to the bridal pair. Nature harmonised with their rapturous state. The balmy air,—sweet scented by the hay,—regaled their senses, as they rambled in the long summer evenings, when the after-glow o'erspread the heavens. Their talk was of seeming trifles, though fraught with dearest meanings to themselves.

As they were returning to the town one glorious night, along the banks of the impetuous Reuss, Bertie said:—

"I shall never forgive you, Gertrude, for the way in which you treated me the first time I declared my love."

"And I shall always consider you in my debt, for the joy and comfort I missed that morning you came, after you knew I was wholly yours."

"You behaved cruelly, sweetheart, that afternoon when you suddenly forsook me."

"Why this recrimination? We are treading on the golden shore of love."

"You rest, then, Gertrude, in my love?"

"Would you know my true attitude? Read

Mrs Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese. They reveal somewhat of the secret of woman's love. Have you read them?"

"No, little princess."

"Well, you shall have a copy bound in white and gold, which you will place among your treasures. I am no poetess, but I take the language of these sonnets, and adopt it as my own."

"I will accept and cherish the book for your sake, and, in exchange, you shall have a copy of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's series of Sonnets called 'The House of Life.' In these you will find my sentiments expressed in the richest and most glowing terms."

"Ah, yes! the poets best utter the language of the heart."

"They are deeply skilled in love's philosophy. You remember how Shelley sings—

> 'See the mountains kiss high heaven,
> And the waves clasp one another;
> No sister flower would be forgiven
> If it disdained its brother;
> And the sunlight clasps the earth,
> And the moonbeams kiss the sea,
> What are all these kissings worth,
> If thou kiss not me?'"

"You have a splendid memory," said Gertrude, with a roguish laugh.

"Oh! you little prosaic—what shall I call you?"

"Queen."

"No. Wife."

"What? dethroned already!"

"Gertrude, if you provoke me I shall certainly be the mountains, waves, sunlight, and moonbeams the poet says such delicious things about."

Bertie feigned as if he were going to carry his threat into execution. Gertrude eluded his outstretched arms, and ran from him like a timid fawn. She was pursued, and quickly o'ertaken. He did clasp her slender form, and he did kiss her ruby lips.

"Oh, Bertie! I'm all out of breath. You must not do that. The people on the road will wonder, and be amused. Listen!"

At that moment they were near an inn, and a band of German students, over their pipes and beer, began to sing one of the melodies of the Fatherland, as only they can do it. The effect was romantic in the highest degree.

The incident arrested Bertie in his frolicsome humour, and Gertrude, taking his arm lovingly, the pair walked sedately to their hotel, hearkening to the soothing vocal strains.

So the honeymoon season passed swiftly on. It was like a bright dream. Those who marry for money, ambition, position, or any other unworthy motive, are apt to find the honeymoon a trying ordeal,—a time of irritation and misunderstanding, and sometimes a period of exquisite torture. For those who marry for love, and love alone, it is an interval of heavenly tranquillity. The cry of their souls, were utterance given to the longing they experience, would be,—"If this be dreaming, do not wake us, let us dream again."

Time, alas, is no respecter of persons. He is a veritable Proteus. To the prisoner in his cell, or the sufferer on a couch of languishing, he appears as a decrepit old man, creeping at snail's pace. To him who waits with eager expectation some anticipated pleasure, he assumes the guise of a tantalizing monster;

and to the man who is in possession of earth's best gifts, he seems a being with wings of lightning speed; for each he transforms himself into the most unwelcome shape.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEAD HAND

"WHERE shall we wander to-day, Bertie?" asked Gertrude, one beautiful morning.

"I think we might sail to Flüelen."

"And see Tell's Chapel on the way? That would be nice."

"Capital. You get ready, love, and we shall be off."

Gertrude sped away in high glee, and just as she disappeared a messenger of evil tidings put a telegraphic communication in Bertie's hands. It was from Sir Edwin Lloyd, and summoned them, with all speed, to Berlin. When Gertrude came back, radiant as the morn, and full of the pleasurable excitement of anticipation, it pained Bertie very much to have to break the news. She was quick to notice that a change had come over his face.

"Has anything happened to distress you?" she enquired.

"Love, we shall have to alter our plans.'

"Why so, dear?'

"Your father——

"What?"

"Be calm, my own."

"Is he dead?"

"No, but seriously ill. We must hasten to Berlin."

"Let me read the message. Trust me. I shall be calm."

Gertrude took the telegram with trembling hands, and read its ominous contents. A picture of her father, as last she had seen him on the memorable wedding day, floated into her mind. She remembered his sad expression, and the pathetic tones of his voice, when he said,—"God bless you." Were these words his final benediction, and had she parted from him forever? Her life suddenly went under a cloud. The bright sunshine, the splendid scenery, and every joy that had been hers, all became, as it were, a cruel mockery.

"Oh, it may not be too late yet. Dearest

Bertie, let us start at once. My father, my dear, dear father. He may recover. All may be well."

It was a sad journey to Berlin, and a sadder arrival there when they found that death had travelled swifter than they had done. Oh, the amount of tragedy, which is wrapped up in "too late" and "never." Gertrude was too late to soothe his dying moments, too late to whisper words of love into his ear, and too late to perform the last kind office. She would never hear his voice again in this world, never more minister to his comfort. He had died in a strange place among foreigners. Perhaps he would not have been tempted from home, but for her marriage and his consequent loneliness. Gertrude reproached herself with this. The little unkindnesses of the past, also, started up like grim spectres, and tortured her with a thousand unavailing regrets.

The home-coming of Gertrude and Bertie was a melancholy one. It was signalized by a funeral instead of by feasting and dancing. The young pair commenced their married life in the well appointed, but old-fashioned, George

Square house. It had been their intention, on returning to Edinburgh from their honeymoon, to go into furnished lodgings till they had time to choose a suitable mansion, as their home. But the Professor's death altered all these schemes. The house in George Square was Gertrude's now. It possessed associations peculiarly precious to her, and as Bertie liked it too, there was no reason why they should not make it their home. So Bertie stepped into the Professor's study, and appropriated it as his own, occupying the same chair, and writing at the same desk. Gertrude asked him not to disturb her father's books. New book-cases were fitted up, on the shelves of which Bertie's library was arranged, and gradually he settled down into some of his old literary habits. Though he did not need to write for a living, ambition spurred him on. He determined by a successful original work, to atone, if possible, for the one which bore the taint of plagiarism, and which he therefore hated, although his fame rested upon it.

Professor Marshall's settlements were the cause of a good deal of irritation to Bertie,

and became the occasion of the first misunderstanding between him and his beautiful wife. A sum of £20,000 was placed in the hands of her Marriage Contract Trustees. The interest on this provision was payable to her during her lifetime, to her husband should he survive her, and to the child or children of the marriage, if any, in fee. It was provided that, failing children, the capital should go to whom Gertrude willed it, and failing any testamentary appointment, then to her heirs *in mobilibus*. The remainder of his estate amounting to about £15,000, the Professor left in Trust, the interest on the capital to be paid to his daughter, during her life, and the fee to the lawful child or children of her body, who might survive her, and, failing issue, to a number of charities named. All this was so far good, but there was a curious clause in a Deed of Directions executed simultaneously with his Trust Disposition and Settlement. It ran in these terms,—"And I hereby direct my Trustees to make over to my only daughter, Gertrude, absolutely, my house in George Square, with the whole household furniture, books, china,

plate, pictures, models, and all other effects whatsoever therein, except the antique carved ebony cabinet in my study, with the contents of the large locked drawer, the key of which I hereby direct my Trustees to retain in their custody; which cabinet along with the contents of said locked drawer, consisting of valuable manuscripts, I direct my Trustees, in the event of my said daughter marrying and having a son, to deliver both cabinet and manuscripts to such son, on his attaining twenty-one years of age; and failing my said daughter marrying and having a son, I hereby direct my Trustees to deliver them to the University of Edinburgh, to be placed in the library of said University."

It was the proviso about the cabinet and manuscripts, which caused Gilbert Heath a great deal of secret annoyance. The cabinet stood in his study. Why did it not belong to him? Why were both he and Gertrude excluded from its precious contents. The sight of it always tended to disturb his mental equilibrium.

"Gertrude, my dear, that is a curious proviso

in your father's settlements about the cabinet and its contents."

"Yes, I confess it is, but we cannot help it."

"It's an unreasonable exercise of the dead hand."

"Please, Bertie, do not speak in that way. You know it grieves me."

"I don't see that we should quietly submit."

"Do you love me?"

"Of course I love you. That has nothing to do with my being annoyed at the absurd clause."

"That may be quite true, dearest, yet I am not to blame."

"I say it is a downright shame. These manuscripts might help me in my literary career, and there they lie of no use to anyone. Who has a better right to them than myself, may I ask?"

"Oh, Bertie! You frighten me. I never saw you look like that before. What shall I do? It is cruel of you to be angry with me, when you know I have not got it in my power to help you."

"I'm not angry with you. Surely some-

thing might be done to nullify the obnoxious proviso."

"My father's wishes should be respected."

"I see, Gertrude, you have no sympathy with me. I don't believe you care a bit for me."

"Dearest, I would do anything in the world for you; only don't look at me like that. I—can't—bear—it." Gertrude began to weep hysterically.

Bertie felt himself to be both a cad and a brute. His lower nature got the mastery, and he determined he would make her yield to his wishes.

"It's confoundedly weak and stupid of you to go on like that. You drive me quite frantic."

"What do you wish me to do, Bertie? I'll do anything you wish—only—don't—behave—so.—It—breaks—my—heart."

These words were uttered between sobs. Gertrude was a spectacle of supreme misery.

"Now do try and calm yourself," said Bertie, beginning to be alarmed, "you vex me by going on like that. Will you consent to my

writing to the Trustees' Agent, asking if permission will be granted you to allow me the use of the manuscripts?"

"Yes, Bertie, anything you wish; but be kind to me."

Alas for the incident, however trivial, that first gives rise to the shadow of grief in wedded life. Is it the opening of,—

> "The little rift within the lute
> That by-and-bye will make the music mute,
> And, ever widening, slowly silence all?"

Surely not, so soon after the honeymoon, and the sacred memories that clustered round a new made grave. Certainly not on Gertrude's side. Her heart was too full of love, too tender, through recent bereavement, to cherish the least resentment. She was only conscious of feeling down in the depths at having, somehow, incurred her husband's displeasure. She was ready to spring back again to peace and joy, if the sun of her heaven would shine out, and smile away her darkness.

Bertie relented, when he saw he had gained his point, and the cloud passed from his brow.

"Come, Gertrude darling, don't hurt your-

self in that way. I do love you, and I am sorry if I said anything to wound you."

"I will be reasonable, for your sake, Bertie," said Gertrude, looking up through her tears. Thus ended the first discord in the harmony of their married life.

Mr Slowley, S.S.C., Bertie's old apprentice-master was, by the irony of fate, also the Agent for the late Professor Marshall's Trustees, and next morning received a letter from Gilbert Heath, in which the request was made, on behalf of his wife, that her father's Trustees should depart from the strict terms of the settlements, and give her possession of the manuscripts, or, failing that, at least allow her to have access to them. Mr Slowley sent for Mr Crossman, and handed him the letter.

"Rather an awkward request, Mr Crossman," mumbled Mr Slowley, shuffling uneasily on his feet, and shaking his gold eye-glass in a jerky manner by its cord, "I remember thinking at the time, that the proviso about the cabinet in Professor Marshall's settlements might lead to trouble. My own impression is, that we cannot advise the Trustees to accede

to the request, though it seems reasonable enough. What is your view?"

Mr Crossman hated Gilbert Heath with a pure and perfect hatred. He had long watched for his opportunity, and now it had come.

"Clearly this is not a case," he said, "where we could advise the Trustees to incur any personal responsibility. It seems to me there is no alternative, but to write and refuse the request."

"What about taking the opinion of Counsel?" asked the wily old man, seeing the prospect of swelling the bill of costs against the Trust Estate.

"The proper course to adopt in the circumstances," answered Mr Crossman, with vicious alacrity.

"Then just write explaining the difficulties in the way of our advising the Trustees to incur any personal responsibility in the matter, but add, that we will be glad to recommend them to take the Opinion of Counsel."

Mr Crossman chuckled maliciously, and left the room to carry out his chief's instructions.

He would checkmate Gilbert Heath in this little game of his, if he could. When Bertie received the epistle from Messrs Slowley & Sharp, in Mr Crossman's own handwriting, he knew that his enemy was at work. He determined, nevertheless, not to be baffled if possible, so he got Gertrude's consent to Counsel's Opinion being taken, and wrote a curt note in reply, requesting the Firm to act on their suggestion.

Mr Slowley and Mr Crossman had another consultation.

"Here are our instructions, Mr Crossman," remarked Mr Slowley, as he gave him Bertie's reply, "you will prepare a Memorial on behalf of the Trustees, and submit it to eminent Counsel. Perhaps Sir Peter Chalmers, Q.C., would be as good a man as any."

Mr Crossman acquiesced, and retired, with spiteful glee, to draw up the Memorial.

CHAPTER XII

SKELETON KEYS

IT is amazing how able and competent lawyers shuffle out of difficulty and responsibility. They heap up expense against their clients, that might easily be avoided, were they themselves to apply the knowledge of law which they possess to the cases coming legitimately within their sphere. But no sooner does a question arise, than they shove it off upon Counsel. They will not act unless they are bolstered up by an Opinion. Mr Slowley was quite able to advise Professor Marshall's Trustees as to the course they should follow, and the Trustees might have followed his advice with perfect safety; but then that would have involved the exercise, on Mr Slowley's part, of professional skill, which it suited him to avoid. The preparation of a Memorial meant fees, and many a

lawyer exists mainly with a view to pocketing these. Thus it came about that Messrs Slowley & Sharp presented their compliments to Sir Peter Chalmers, Q.C., along with a lengthy Memorial, a copy of Professor Marshall's Settlements, and a substantial fee in guineas, and requested him to favour them with his Opinion. The whole thing was a solemn farce. Sir Peter,—a heavy, stout man, with a countenance suggestive of a liberal indulgence in Old Tawny Port,—fumed and fretted over his papers, and then begged for a consultation, before writing his Opinion. At the consultation he asked, with a facetious grin, what sort of Opinion the Trustees wanted. Mr Crossman, who graced the meeting with his presence, indicated the lines on which the learned Counsel should go, and Sir Peter blandly acquiesced. Of course his Opinion was adverse to Mrs Heath, both as to her getting possession of the manuscripts, and being allowed the inspection and use of them.

"There," said Bertie, handing the letter and Opinion to Gertrude, after he received

them, "they refuse our reasonable request, even to be allowed to see these precious manuscripts."

Gertrude took the papers with a trembling hand. She dreaded a repetition of their last misunderstanding.

"It's too bad," she remarked soothingly.

"I know who's at the bottom of it. It means good money wasted to no purpose."

"That is the least vexatious part of the business. I do feel very much annoyed that you should be deprived of them, since they might have been so helpful."

"That's just where the sting comes in. I might have utilised them. At present they are of no use to anyone, and there is a possibility that they may eventually become the property of the University. But I will say no more about it, Gertrude. You have done your part, and shown that you love me."

With a sigh of relief Gertrude left the room. She felt glad the trouble was at an end. It was a nasty bone of contention finally disposed of.

Gilbert Heath was no sooner alone than he

rose from his desk, and paced up and down the study, in anything but a calm state of mind. He surmised that Mr Crossman, his old enemy, had baffled him about the manuscripts, and he was right. As he walked to and fro, like a wild beast in a cage, the black cabinet for ever confronted him, with its locked drawer and prohibited contents. His imagination pictured these mysterious contents, and a great hunger of curiosity took possession of his soul. Professor Marshall had been a shrewd collector, and doubtless the drawer was filled with papers of great interest and rarity. He remembered the strong-room and the abstracted manuscript. No one had ever discovered his crime, and to it, in a sense, he owed all his good fortune,—fame, position, wealth, and, best of all, a loving, tender-hearted, devoted wife. The devil, verily, is kind to his own. The career of villainy is often a successful one. Bertie found, not without a strong inward sense of disgust, that the evil propensities, which he thought had died a natural death, were alive and active in his nature. The love-making

and the freshness of early married life, had only been absorbing incidents, causing him to forget what manner of man he really was. They were incidents that had drawn him for a time into a higher plane, making him seem to himself a convert from his wicked past, but now that the novelty of his changed circumstances had worn off his former self revived, and was revealed to him unchanged. It was a horrible and humiliating discovery, yet his mind rushed forth to meet it, and hug it in a wild embrace. He felt at home with the cunning, scheming, sneaking side of his nature, as with a familiar spirit. That higher, nobler, and more truthful side of his being, with which he had consorted for some time past, seemed a comparative stranger to him,—as one with whom he had always to be on his guard, and with whom he could exchange no confidences.

Plato has said, somewhere, that the chariot of the soul is drawn by two horses, the one white and the other black. The former is ever striving to pull the chariot upwards and heavenwards, while the latter is straining

every muscle to drag it downwards and hellwards. It was the black steed that now had command of Bertie's chariot, and whither was it going to carry him? He threw the reins on the neck of the furious animal, and blindly deemed he had accomplished a splendid stroke of cleverness.

While thus under the influence of the black steed's guidance, a scheme flashed into his mind, and no sooner found a lodgment there, than he set about planning how it was to be executed. He resolved secretly to open the locked drawer, and examine the manuscripts which it contained. Such as might be serviceable, to the work he contemplated, he would utilise and afterwards destroy. He knew that no inventory of the papers existed, and that the key, enclosed in a sealed packet, was in the custody of Sir Edwin Lloyd, one of Professor Marshall's Trustees. Gertrude had informed him of these facts. The question arose,—how were his designs to be accomplished? After a little deliberation, he resolved to get possession of a bunch of skeleton keys. One of them would be sure to fit the

lock. Gertrude would never know what he had done, and no real harm could come of his action. Were the manuscripts not practically his wife's property, and therefore his also, he argued, notwithstanding the absurd clause in the Professor's settlements?

Bertie sallied forth in quest of the keys. He dived down Victoria Street, and tried various pawnbrokers' sale-rooms, and second-hand tool shops, without success. Then he descended to the Cowgate, that long narrow thoroughfare of the poor, and at last saw a large bunch of old skeleton keys hanging in the window of a shabby warehouse, where wretched furniture, and a miscellaneous assortment of odds and ends were displayed. He plunged into the gloomy premises, a bell ringing furiously as he pushed open the door. A slatternly dressed woman made her appearance, and in answer to Bertie's eager enquiry, informed him that the keys were for sale. There was no haggling about the price. Bertie would have given ten times the amount demanded for them. He threw the sum named on the counter. The keys in a moment

became his. He thrust them into his pocket, and hurried home, feeling guilty.

While Bertie was away that afternoon, Gertrude chatted pleasantly over the tea-cups with Pauline and her mother. Pauline's forthcoming wedding, of course, formed the topic of conversation, and Archibald Grierson, the prospective bridegroom, received his full meed of praise from the ladies.

"It is a pity you can't be one of my bridesmaids," said Pauline to Gertrude.

"There's Hilda M'Intosh. She will set off your raven locks with her flaxen tresses," suggested Gertrude.

"How you girls do talk about such things," said Mrs Sheldon. "It is friendship, not mere personal appearance, that ought to rule in these matters."

"Yes, there's Hilda," sighed Pauline, "but she's not——"

"We won't listen to anything against Hilda," interrupted Mrs Sheldon, "she's a special favourite of mine."

"How often has she been a bridesmaid?" asked Gertrude, with an amused expression.

"Three times, if I remember rightly," replied Pauline.

"You know the adage,—'Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,'" laughed Gertrude.

"I have no fear of Hilda," observed Mrs Sheldon. "If she were here she would defend herself. She is one of the independent order of girls. I do like the modern type of woman. Frank, free, and strong to stand alone. They will make the epithet 'old maid' honourable, since they will prove that it is from liberty of choice, not from compulsion, through want of suitable proposals, that they have remained aloof from the bonds of matrimony."

Gertrude clapped her hands at this little speech, and, turning to Pauline remarked,—

"When your mother advocates sentiments like these, I wonder at your contemplating wearing the slavish chains of wedlock."

"I wonder at myself. I recollect the time, when I would have disdained to hold views diverse from those of Hilda, but since your wedding day, dear, my opinions on many subjects have been changed."

At this moment Bertie entered, looking pale,

but cheerful. He had just deposited the bunch of skeleton keys in a secret corner of his desk, and intended, that very night, to try to open the locked drawer of the ebony cabinet.

"You look tired, Bertie. Where have you been? Will you take a cup of tea? Here are Mrs Sheldon and Pauline, come to tell us the date of the wedding."

Bertie congratulated Pauline warmly.

"My dear Miss Sheldon," he said, "I wish you every happiness. You know, I daresay, that Mr Grierson is my bosom friend. I have not seen him, however, for a long time. How is he?"

Pauline's face, when her lover's name was mentioned, at once became animated.

"Oh, he is very well indeed, thank you, Mr Heath," she said, with a smile that bore eloquent testimony to her affection for the man with whom she was about to cast in her lot in life.

"I suppose he has been better occupied lately, than to waste his time coming to see me," remarked Bertie, giving Pauline a knowing glance.

"Yes," explained Pauline, blushing slightly, and looking archly at Bertie, "you can guess that we have had to be a good deal together during the past few weeks. You cannot have forgotten how selfish you were yourself, not so long ago."

"I quite sympathise with you," said Bertie gallantly. "Tell him, the first time you meet, that I am wearying to see him. We have a great deal to talk over."

"Pauline, dear, we shall have to be going," put in Mrs Sheldon, rising.

"You've no idea, Mr Heath, what a busy time I am having just now. By the way, I was telling your wife of a large gathering of friends we are to have shortly. We shall certainly count upon both of you being present."

Mrs Sheldon and her daughter took leave of Gertrude and Bertie, and that evening Archibald Grierson appeared at George Square, to tell the same news, which Pauline had already imparted.

"And so you have turned up at last, Archie," said Bertie, heartily welcoming his friend.

"I thought you and Mrs Heath would like to know that the date of the wedding has been fixed."

"We have been told to-day," said Gertrude, smiling.

"By whom?" asked Archie.

"Pauline, of course. She and her mother were here this afternoon," explained Gertrude.

"I'm awfully glad to hear that you are going to live near us, Archie," observed Bertie. "We shall have jolly times together. I don't say I envy you. That might make my wife jealous, but I do think you are a lucky man."

"You need not be afraid of making me jealous," interposed Gertrude, "I can be more enthusiastic in praising Pauline than either of you. She is the loveliest girl I have ever seen, and the best I have ever known."

"It does one good to come and see one's friends," said Grierson, and he settled himself down in a cosy chair.

The three had a triangular gossip about houses and furniture, and no end of intensely interesting subjects, relative to the setting up

of an establishment. Later on, music was proposed. Gertrude took her seat at the piano, and played, first a soothing nocturne, and then a delicious polonaise by Chopin. As her jewelled hands sparkled on the key-board, a strange world, in which emotion reigned supreme, was revealed to the two young men. They listened with rapt attention to the varying moods of the great master, now tinged with melancholy, and anon soaring into the heights of impassioned gladness. As Bertie watched the graceful form of his wife, and, like a thirsty man at a fountain, drank in her beauty, William Watson's dainty poem on the key-board came into his mind. When the rare harmonies ceased, and she rose and sat down beside the guest of the evening, he recited the verse he deemed most appropriate :—

"Dusky slaves and pallid,
Ebon slaves and white,
When the queen was on her throne
How you sang to-night !
Ah, the throats of thunder !
Ah, the dulcet lips !
Ah, the gracious tyrannies
Of her finger tips ! "

"It is curious," said Grierson, "I was just thinking of Watson's poem also, while you were playing, Mrs Heath. Are you acquainted with his works?"

"No," replied Gertrude.

"Then I should be proud," volunteered Grierson, "to be the means of introducing them to you. I shall lend you my copy. Some people say he should have been Poet Laureate."

"After Tennyson, it seems almost sacrilege to instal any living poet to the office," remarked Gertrude.

"Let me assure you, Mrs Heath," said Grierson, "a perusal of his poems will cause you to modify your views. I have been told he is a great lover of music, and that Schubert's songs have entered into his blood,—become part of his very nature."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Gertrude, "that is interesting. The musician and the poet should minister to each other's arts. The great Liszt said of Schubert,—'*Le musicien le plus poétique.*' Now, Mr Grierson, do sing us one of Schubert's songs."

Archibald Grierson had a rich baritone voice, and he always played his own accompaniment. He was enthusiastically fond of Schubert, and contemplated writing a paper on "Schubert as a song writer." To-night he commenced by singing, most sympathetically, from the volume which Gertrude handed to him, the famous "Serenade."

> "Softest pleadings shall my song bear
> Through the night to thee,
> In the silent grove below, then,
> Darling, come to me!"

What lover of melody is not familiar with this classic gem? Archie literally revelled in its wealth of expression. He was in love. Pauline would soon be his blushing bride, and this song, beyond all others, best gave utterance to the yearnings of his heart. When he had finished there was an interval of silence. It seemed nothing short of vandalism to break the spell thrown over the listeners by a return to spoken words. Bertie was the first to transgress.

"Do you know the circumstances in which

that song was composed?" he enquired of Archie.

"No; but I should imagine it was written in the palace of the Countess Caroline, amid the most congenial surroundings."

"Far from that," said Bertie, laughing, "I read the other day, in a work on eminent musicians, that the 'Serenade' was composed in a Viennese tavern, amid a babel of noise, and among squalid surroundings."

"Oh, Bertie!" interposed Gertrude, "you take all the romance out of it."

"I can't help that," protested her husband. "The truth is precious. There was no paper at hand on which to write the divine melody, so Schubert snatched up a bill of fare, and wrote his song on the back of it."

"Mr Grierson, is that not like shattering one's idols?" asked Gertrude.

"No," answered Grierson, "it only proves to me that genius can rise superior to the accidents of circumstance. I should prefer, all the same, to have believed that the 'Serenade' was inspired by the Countess Caroline."

"I share your view," said Gertrude. "I

love to think of beauty in nature and art, exercising benign influences on great men."

"Then you will be glad to know," observed Bertie, "that the memory haunting air known as,—'Rousseau's Dream,' was romantic in its origin. One evening Jean Jacques fell asleep, while in the Theatre of Saint Chrysostom, at Venice, and in his dreams heard angelic strains. He awoke in a state of ecstatic rapture. He did not need to compose. He simply transferred the music of his dream to the score."

"We shall set the one story off against the other," said Grierson, by way of comment. "Now, Mrs Heath, please persuade your husband to sing."

"Persuade me?" asked Bertie, in a tone of simulated indignation, at the same time springing to his feet. "I never need much persuasion. What is it to be? Another of Schubert's? We will make this a Schubert night."

"Certainly, my dear," murmured Gertrude, in soft sweet voice, amused at her husband's boyish excitement.

"Which one do you prefer, Archie?" enquired Bertie.

"Sing that one called, — 'Impatience,'" demanded Grierson.

"Ha, ha, Archie!" cried Bertie. "It isn't difficult to see who is uppermost in your mind to-night. You want me to give that song on account of its refrain,—'*Dein ist mein Herz.*' And if I were to humour you, a vision of Pauline would be conjured up in your imagination. No, no. You must humour me instead. Come, and accompany me to 'Faith in Spring.'"

Bertie, like his friend Archie, also possessed a good baritone voice, but he took his high notes with much greater ease than did the latter. "Faith in Spring" was followed, much to Gertrude's annoyance, by the dramatic little duet,—"Death and the Maiden." She disliked the sentiment, and, though she could not deny the weird power of the melody, she shuddered at the gruesomeness of the words.

"You know I don't like that song, Bertie," protested Gertrude. "It always makes me feel inclined to shiver. Why do you persist in singing it, whenever you get the chance?"

"Just because I like it, dear."

"Mr Grierson, will you sing again, please?" asked Gertrude. "Something lively to take away the gloomy impression of 'Death and the Maiden.'"

"With pleasure, Mrs Heath. Would you care for 'Rosamund?'"

"Oh, yes, do sing 'Rosamund,'" she replied, "I am so fond of it. I could not say, however, that it is a lively song."

"True. Most of Schubert's songs," explained Grierson, "are tinged with sadness. His life, you see, was tragic. He was a disappointed lover."

Archie brought the little impromptu concert to an appropriate conclusion, on finishing "Rosamund," by giving a superb rendering of the "Adieu."

> "The hour when we must sever,
> The farewell hour is near."

Why is it that the pathos of life is often felt most keenly when we have attained to moments of bliss we wish could last for ever? This experience is one of the mysteries of our time-governed world, and of our complex mental constitution. Imagination and

memory,—these twin wonder-working faculties, the one rushing to embrace the future, the other clasping lovingly the past,—make the present a state of suspense, discontent, unrest, and dissatisfaction.

> "We look before and after
> And pine for what is not:
> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught;
> Our sweetest songs are those that tell
> Of saddest thought."

When Archibald Grierson had gone, both Gertrude and Bertie realised that a strong lovable personality had been withdrawn. Grierson possessed an open, manly nature. Bertie honoured and admired him as his staunch friend, and could not but recognise that his influence made for righteousness. In his company, thoughts of treachery, deceit, and dishonesty, vanished as the damp mists, which hug the Highland valleys, disappear before the genial rays of the sun. Had it been possible for Bertie to be constantly beside Grierson, there might have been good hope that his character would have undergone

thorough and permanent reformation. Even a few hours' intercourse with Archie had killed in Bertie, that night, the desire to open the locked drawer of the ebony cabinet with the skeleton keys.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISCOVERED CRIME

CHATTERTON, in his London garret, contemplating the poison draught, was not more miserable than Gilbert Heath next morning, when he knew that his plagiarism had been discovered. His true character was unmasked at last. He had often boasted that he wore a mask, but he never imagined it would be ruthlessly torn off by other hands than his own, and that he would be exposed to the world in all the cunning and deceit of his nature. What would Gertrude think? The thought stung him that she would be involved in his ruin.

Mr Crossman, who was a member of a philosophical reading club, no sooner read the article by Mr Austen Lawrie in the *Onlooker*, than he forthwith procured a copy, marked and underlined the most obnoxious

passages in blue pencil, and sent it to Gilbert Heath. It was this copy which lay before him, as he sat, haggard and sick with fear, at his desk. The very passages he had taken verbatim from Thomas Rushworth's notes were signalised. His name would become a jest and a byword. Society would point the finger of scorn at him, and any new book which he might publish would be stamped in the world of letters as the work of a plagiarist. If it possessed merit, people would sneer, and declare that the best parts had been stolen. Gilbert Heath charged himself with madness. Surely he must have been mad when he committed the crime, and was fool enough to suppose it would never be brought to the light. At first his agitation was so great that he could not read the article connectedly. He did not really grasp its meaning or the extent of the charge brought against him. His eyes fastened greedily on an underlined sentence here and there, and when he came to the passage where the reviewer hinted that there seemed to be evidence of plagiarism, and mentioned

Thomas Rushworth's name, a cold sweat crept over his frame, he flung down the *Onlooker*, and, burying his face in his hands, abandoned himself to remorse and despair. He was a pitiable spectacle. If Gertrude had come into the study when the frenzy was on him, he would certainly have thrown himself at her feet, confessed his crime, asked her if she could ever forgive him, and besought the counsel she could so wisely and tenderly give. Gertrude, however, was otherwise engaged, and had not the least suspicion of the tragedy being enacted in the study by its solitary occupant.

As Gilbert Heath revolved the whole thing in his mind, he felt himself to be a criminal, cornered at last, and this exasperating sensation made him desperate. Was there no loop-hole of escape? Who could the writer of this article be, that, under the cloak of anonymousness, dealt so cruel a blow? What course was he to pursue? Would anything be gained by brazening the whole thing out, or would it be better to accept the righteous punishment of heaven, and be an exile, spend-

ing the rest of his days in wretched obscurity? While thus tortured, by what seemed to him endless insoluble problems, he recollected that he had not read the article through, having only glanced at a few disconnected paragraphs. The thought acted like a ray of light let in upon darkness. A glimmering hope was born. With eager trembling hands, he again took up the *Onlooker*, and set himself to the task of reading the criticism through. As he read hope brightened. The reviewer, whoever he might be, admitted that his work had merit, quite apart from those passages concerning which plagiarism was alleged. Then, as to those portions pointed out as probably the work of Thomas Rushworth, this critic, while he affirmed that both in subject, matter, and style, they were Rushworthian, did not venture on parallel passages, or name the books where such could be found. The unknown critic contented himself with asserting that he believed he could furnish parallel passages if necessary. The article, though severe in the extreme, and crushingly condemnatory of the criminality of plagiarism,

in language that bit the very paper, was nevertheless, in many respects, sufficiently vague to permit Gilbert Heath to pursue, with perfect feasibility, a policy of denial. By the time a gentle tap was heard at the study door, Bertie had made up his mind to adopt that policy.

"Come in," he cried hoarsely.

Gertrude entered.

"I hope I am not disturbing you at your work, dear," she said timidly, "I want your advice about a wedding present for Pauline."

"Please do not worry me about trifles like that. I can't give you any advice just now."

"I sometimes think you work too hard, Bertie. I'm afraid it will tell on your health. I wish you would give up bothering about books."

"Gertrude, I would prefer if you did not disturb me just now."

"Dearest, this labour you are giving yourself is making you very cross with your own little wife. Will you not give it up for my sake?"

"I have not been working at my book this morning."

"Then something is vexing you. Do tell me what it is?"

"I have been charged with plagiarism. There, look at that."

"Your book on Italian Art? Surely, Bertie, you would never be guilty——"

"Guilty?" demanded Bertie savagely. "Can you believe me guilty?"

"Dear heart, you startle me. No, I could never believe that of you."

"It is false," muttered Bertie between his teeth.

"I know it is."

"My reputation may be ruined, all the same."

"Your character is above suspicion."

"There are those who will give credence to this nameless critic."

"You will prove that he has written an untruth. I should recommend you to write to the Editor of the *Onlooker*, and demand the name of the reviewer."

Bertie grasped at the suggestion, and forth-

with wrote to London, requesting the Editor of the *Onlooker* to furnish him with the name of the author of the article that had wounded him so grievously. Meantime the days went wearily by. Bertie avoided the society of his friends. He pretended to Gertrude that he was busily engaged with his literary work, when in reality he was brooding over the obnoxious review, and wondering what would be the final issue of the awkward dilemma in which he found himself involved. The skeleton keys lay forgotten in his desk. He had no heart for an enterprise of such pith and moment as the opening and ransacking of the big drawer in the ebony cabinet. His spirit had been broken, and he went about in a listless, aimless kind of way, dreading intercourse with his fellow-men.

Gertrude noticed the change which had come over her husband. She never for a moment suspected that he was guilty of plagiarism, and she therefore attributed his melancholy and apathy to the shock that his sensitive nature received by the fulmination of so base and groundless a charge. She

judged that time would work its own cure, and fondly hoped the genial influence of society would tend to bring him back to his usually bright and animated disposition. She did not know the true cause of his malady. Though bound to him by the closest and dearest ties that can unite one human being to another, she was yet a perfect stranger to his true character. His soul was veiled from her eyes, not only by the garment of flesh, but by the more subtle garments of conduct and speech. These habiliments proclaimed him to be an upright and lovable man. She had been deceived, yet, even if the truth had been revealed to her, she would have continued to adore him. There is a splendid persistency about a true woman's nature. She will cling to the man on whom she has set her affection through good and ill report, and, when what she regards as a slander is uttered against him, is ready, with Juliet, to cry,—

"Blister'd be thy tongue for such a word,"

in righteous wrath, to the calumniator. Gertrude knew that, ever since the grave charge had

been brought against her husband, her life had passed under a cloud. She became nervous and anxious. If she had been asked the reason of her disquiet, she would not have been able to give an intelligent answer. Her lord had become moody and reserved. The fibres of her being were so inextricably intertwined with his, that the practical results to her, consequent on the change which had o'ertaken him, were depression of spirit, an undefinable sense of alarm, and presentiments of impending calamity.

For Bertie the outlook was black as night. The misdeeds of the past flew crowding round him like croaking ravens and hungry vultures flapping their wings, eager to dive their beaks into his quivering flesh. When a man is found out as the perpetrator of a flagrant crime, other misdemeanours start to life and confront him. His conscience is terror stricken, and he becomes morbidly sensitive. If he has taken steps towards reformation, as Bertie had done, he is apt to view the situation more gloomily and hopelessly than either those who have never shown tendencies to a better life, or

those who have been protected from sins of mind and body in their grosser forms. It sometimes happens that men are harsher in their judgments on themselves than their neighbours would be, did they know the whole circumstances. As a rule men are more lenient with their own faults, and condemn in others what they secretly sanction. This is the principle so long as men seem to possess virtues, though they have them not. It is when they are discovered, or think that they are discovered, that the rule is often reversed, and they paint themselves in such sombre colours that their friends, and even their enemies, would not recognise the portrait. Had it been possible for any one to get a glimpse of the pictures which hung in the chamber of Bertie's imagination during these anxious days, the sight would have been a startling one. The wretched man was travelling into his past life, and all its incidents were being brooded over, till he saw himself one of the most abandoned villains on the face of God's earth. He could have combated the disgrace alone, but

the thought of Gertrude knowing how dishonourable he had been, was wormwood. Questions clamoured for solution. Was life worth having on such conditions as were likely to be his? Did he value it so highly that he would be willing to exist, even with a shattered reputation? The idea of committing suicide crossed his mind. He shuddered at the very suggestion, and confessed to himself that he was too much of a coward to rush unbidden into the presence of the Judge on the great White Throne. He was a poor battered hulk without rudder, without anchor, on a tempestuous sea, filled with terror and irresolution, drifting he knew not whither.

Austen Lawrie, the immediate cause of Gilbert Heath's overwhelming distress, though he knew his critique would wound when it came home to the right quarter, had no guess of the utter collapse and prostration it would be the means of bringing about in its victim. He was anxious to find out something about the daring young author. At the Bachelors' Club he happened to meet Mr Slowley, and, in the course of conversation asked :

"Do you know anything of Gilbert Heath, the writer of a book on Italian Art?"

"Oh, yes. A most intelligent young man. He was, for a time, in our office, then took to literature, eventually succeeded to a big fortune through an uncle, and married the only daughter of the late Professor Marshall."

This was a budget of information, and Lawrie felt immensely interested.

"It is very curious," he observed, "that I should not have known all this when I wrote my article. I fancied he was some obscure young man, without means, position, or influence."

"I see. Ha, ha, ha," laughed old Slowley, "and so if you had only known, you would have toned down your paper."

"Most certainly I should not."

"Ha! I'm not so sure of that."

"I perceive, sir, you do not know me. My paper was mild considering the case with which I had to deal. Have you read it?"

"Oh dear, no. We men of business have not time to cultivate the amenities of literature.

Our noses are too constantly on the grindstone."

"The more's the pity. Has your firm ever had anything to do with the affairs of the late Thomas Rushworth?"

"The name is familiar to me. I scarcely think we have, but I will make enquiries if you are anxious about the matter."

"I shall esteem it a great favour if you will find out and let me know."

When old Mr Slowley went back to the office that afternoon, he sent for Mr Crossman, and mumbled to the following effect:—

"I met Mr Austen Lawrie at the Club to-day, and he was asking me about Gilbert Heath who used to be in our office. He is curious to learn if we ever had anything to do with the late Thomas Rushworth's affairs. I don't know why he wants the information. You might look into the matter and let me know. By the way, it seems Mr Heath wrote a book, which Mr Lawrie has criticised."

"I have read the criticism," said Mr Crossman.

"What is the nature of it?"

"Mr Lawrie charges Gilbert Heath with plagiarising from Thomas Rushworth's works."

"Thomas Rushworth! Why, we acted for Dr Grieve's executors. I did not catch the name when Mr Lawrie was speaking. Tut, tut, what am I saying. I mean I did not think at the time that he referred to the famous Thomas Rushworth. I see now what he wants to be at. This is a curious business. Let me know what executry papers we possess. Now that I remember, there were documents of literary value committed to our custody."

Obedient to his master's request, Mr Crossman left the room to commence his investigations. There was a nasty gleam in his eyes. These bloodshot orbs glistened with savage glee. He looked like a sleuthhound that had got the scent, and was now fairly on the track of the victim.

CHAPTER XIV

TAKING THE PLUNGE

"BERTIE, you are remembering, I hope, that we are due at Mrs Sheldon's to-night," said Gertrude, as they were finishing a silent dinner.

Bertie started.

"I had quite forgotten about that engagement, Gertrude. I do not wish to go."

"But, dear, we promised to be present. Mrs Sheldon would not be pleased if we disappointed her."

"You can go, and make some excuse for me. Say I have not been so well lately. That is quite true."

"No, I shall not go alone, Bertie, and you do not wish to punish me by refusing to accompany me."

"You know how I hate society now."

"That feeling will wear off. You'll have

to make the plunge sooner or later. Better sooner than later."

"I shall hold you responsible then, Gertrude, for the consequences," said Bertie sulkily.

"Very well, I am willing to incur the responsibility. I'm quite sure no harm will come of it."

"I will go then, Gertrude, only if any harm does come of it, you will be to blame, and I shall be guided by my own judgment in the future."

Gertrude was glad she had carried her point. She considered that cheerful company was the best antidote for the melancholy moping spirit which had taken possession of her husband. Bertie, on the other hand, felt like a criminal, whose warder had come to lead him forth to his trial.

That night there assembled such a gathering in Mrs Sheldon's fashionable drawing-rooms as would have required the pencil of a Du Maurier to do justice to it. The *crême de la crême* of society was represented. Youth, beauty, wit, talent, intellect, and even genius

were there. Mrs Sheldon was a woman of great taste, and a consummate mistress of the art of managing her guests. This is a much more difficult and delicate art than many people suppose. The French have made it a special study, and raised it to the level of a fine art. The British are attempting, slowly, to follow in the footsteps of their neighbours across the Channel; but it is only here and there that evidence is to be found of any real progress. Many, in these days, are anxious to shine as did Madame Recamier in her salon, yet few possess the requisite qualifications, namely,—beauty, wit, and wealth, three requisites which seldom concur in one person. They certainly did not concur in Mrs Sheldon. Still, she was a successful society woman, and far above the average hostess. She knew how to dispose of her guests, as she knew how to decorate and arrange the furniture in her drawing-rooms. Just as there was nothing *bizarre* about the tones of her fawn-coloured walls and curtains, the white and gold of the wood-work, the tender blue tints wrought into the cornices, the choice and placing of lamps, tapers, statu-

ary, pictures, ferns, palms, and the hundred items of *bric-à-brac* fashion has rendered indispensable, — so there were no inharmonious elements amidst the throng she had gathered within her æsthetic precincts ; unless, indeed, such an element was introduced with the arrival of Mr and Mrs Heath. They were very late, and Mrs Sheldon had begun to think something was preventing them from keeping their engagement. Her face brightened when they were announced.

"Ah, Gertrude, dear!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad to see you. And you too, Mr Heath. Why did you not come earlier ? You have missed the treat of the evening."

"I am sorry for that," said Bertie.

"Yes, you may well be sorry. Professor Hutton, of Oxford, read a short paper on the Functions of Illustrative Art, and Mr Grierson made a little speech afterwards, and thanked the Professor so nicely. Mr Heath, I must introduce you to Mrs Hutton."

Mrs Sheldon could not have done better for Bertie. She must have noticed his nervous dejected look, and at once arrived at the con-

clusion that the Professor's wife was the person best calculated to restore his mental equilibrium. Pauline had hinted to her that he had been much disturbed lately about a criticism on his work.

Mrs Hutton was a superb woman of the statuesque type of beauty. Suitably draped she would have made an ideal Galatea. Her conversational powers were not great. She ventured a remark now and again, but she seemed to prefer to be silent. Bertie, however, thought her eyes were most eloquent. In the quiescent attitude she possessed enough to impress those who beheld her. She could create a sensation through sheer force of physical attraction. If the truth must be told, Mrs Hutton belonged to the genus known as professional beauty, a genus less and less tolerated in a practical age.

Bertie talked away, and found her an appreciative listener. She smiled, and her dark eyes flashed sympathy. He discovered her influence to be soothing, and regained a measure of confidence. By-and-by the charming *tête-a-tête* was brought to a close, for Mrs

Hutton was led away to the piano, and sang divinely. Bertie joined a group of friends, whom he had observed in eager discussion. The group consisted of Pauline Sheldon, Hilda M'Intosh, Archibald Grierson, Professor Hutton, and Mr Arnold, the sub-editor of a well-known journal. When the music ceased, talk was resumed.

"We've been having the play without Hamlet," observed Hilda. "You have joined us most opportunely, Mr Heath."

"Am I Hamlet then?" asked Bertie, with a puzzled expression.

"Of course, you are? Who else, I should like to know, could sustain so distinguished a *rôle?*" enquired Hilda, with a little toss of her head.

"The subject of discussion," explained Grierson, looking a trifle embarrassed, "has been that recent criticism of your book."

Bertie turned deadly pale, and a tremor shook his frame.

"We have come to the conclusion," remarked Pauline, in a kindly tone, "that the writer of the article must be shown up for his false

charges, and receive a well-merited castigation."

"I know who wrote the critique," volunteered Mr Arnold.

"Perhaps you will inform us who the obnoxious individual is," said Professor Hutton.

"If Mr Heath permits me," observed Mr Arnold, glancing towards Bertie.

"I would rather you did not mention his name," protested Bertie, who could scarcely control his agitation.

"How generous!" exclaimed Hilda. "Mr Heath, you have done nobly in seeking to screen an enemy."

"Yes, and especially one who stabs in the dark," interposed Professor Hutton, "I have read your book, Mr Heath, and I consider the charge of plagiarism brought against you outrageously absurd."

"Do you think, Professor Hutton, the critic will be credited by most of his readers?" enquired Bertie, his lips quivering with emotion.

"Certainly not," answered that savant, pursing his mouth. "Charges of this kind

are becoming very common, and we may expect to look for their frequent recurrence in a literary age."

"Besides, even if the charge were so far true, would it necessarily injure an author's reputation?" asked Hilda näively.

"Not if the author's work possesses merit independently of the plagiarism," replied Mr Arnold. "The fact that Laurence Sterne plagiarised from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, has not done much to injure his literary reputation, and De Musset is reckoned by many to be a clever, original writer, though I have heard it affirmed that he copied more than a page from De Quincey's Opium Eater into one of his works, passing it off as his own."

"Then there was Chatterton," suggested Pauline.

"Ah! That was more a case of literary forgery," explained Professor Hutton pompously. "We must distinguish between forgery, plagiarism, and piracy. The forger attempts to pass off as the genuine work of another man what he has done himself. The plagiarist

steals another's thoughts and palms them on the public as his own: while the pirate coolly and unblushingly takes literary material which he thinks will sell, and prints it, without recognising the rights of the author, or compensating him for it."

"In short," said Mr Arnold, who had grown impatient with the Professor's long-winded statement, "the first is a cheat, the second a thief, and the third a robber."

"Exactly," continued the Professor, "you could not have put the truth more tersely, Mr Arnold. I have myself suffered from the last-mentioned order of literary pests. Pirated notes of some of my lectures were published in America."

"But the law of International Copyright should protect you," put in Hilda, in quite superior accents.

"Unfortunately, my lectures were published before that law came into operation," explained the Oxford savant.

"Professor Hutton," cried Pauline, "your classification of literary delinquencies requires amendment."

"In what respect?" demanded the Professor, drawing himself up proudly.

"That which was thought to be plagiarism," replied Pauline timidly, "may in reality have been simply coincidence of thought."

"True," said Professor Hutton, condescending to smile. "The crime of plagiarism can be committed either in letter or spirit."

"The essence of the sin," interposed Hilda, "consists in secretly utilising another man's thoughts and passing them off as one's own. This may be done by transcribing the exact words of an author, or clothing the stolen thoughts in language that will give them the semblance of originality."

"We must exercise great care, however, in dealing with the difficult subject of plagiarism," observed Mr Arnold. "Shakespeare borrowed his plots from Boccaccio, the Old Chroniclers, and other sources. I suppose very few of his dramas are, in this respect, original. Was he therefore a plagiarist? And what are we to say of Goethe, who borrowed the Faust Legend, and of Tennyson, who dug the "Idylls of

the King" from the "Morte D'Arthur" of Malory?"

"If the unvarnished truth has to be told," remarked Grierson, "genius, in all ages, struts about in borrowed plumes."

"The genius lay in the treatment of the themes borrowed," explained Pauline. "Dull men might have written legends and chronicles to the end of time, and they would have lain so much dust-covered lumber on the book-shelves. They were passed through the alembic of the brain of genius, and lo! they became instinct with life, and were hailed by the world in their new garb with wonder and delight."

"We have wandered from the original subject of discussion," said Professor Hutton sententiously. "It was about your book, Mr Heath, and that mendacious article. I propose to take up the cudgels on your behalf."

"A literary duel. Do you not think it would be wiser for me to fight my own battles?" asked Bertie, feeling greatly relieved at the turn which the conversation had taken,

and flattered at the Professor's championship of his cause.

"That is a matter of opinion," answered the Oxford pundit. "Many a man shrinks from such a combat on his own account."

Mrs Sheldon came up at this moment, and requested Bertie to sing. She said :—

"Your wife tells me she brought your music, and Mrs Hutton has expressed a wish to hear you."

Bertie complied with pleasure to so reasonable a request. Mrs Sheldon noticed that he was flushed and excited, and that the dejected look he had worn when he arrived had vanished. A great change had, indeed, come over him. The conversation he took part in revealed to him what people were saying and thinking about Austen Lawrie's criticism of his book, and it gave him hope and courage. He cursed himself, as a fool and idiot, for having shown such a faint heart. He resolved to push forward the second book on which he had been engaged for some time past, and have it in the publisher's hands without delay. It was a manual on Illustrative Art. He was

sorry now that he had missed hearing Professor Hutton's paper that night. As he and Gertrude drove home, she was overjoyed to observe the turn for the better things had taken.

"Dearest, you do not regret accompanying me to-night?" she asked.

"You were right, Gertrude, my own little wife. I find these Huttons very interesting."

"Yes. Mrs Hutton is a fine-looking woman. I talked a great deal to her, and she listened and looked so pleased."

"She and the Professor might act Pygmalion and Galatea."

"Oh, Bertie, you are so funny."

"Gertrude, love."

"Dear?"

"Mrs Sheldon was telling me the Huttons will soon be leaving Edinburgh. I would like you to ask them to dinner. I wish to consult him about my new book. He is an authority on Illustrative Art."

"I shall write and ask them for Friday first. Will that do?"

"Admirably, and you can ask Grierson to meet them."

Gertrude was only too glad to carry out her husband's wishes. She felt as if a great weight had been lifted from her life, peace and happiness being restored to her once more.

CHAPTER XV

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

DURING the next few days, Bertie made rapid progress with his new book. His mind, somehow, had been emancipated from the haunting suspicions which lately made him their prey,—paralyzing alike his reason and imagination. He was not absolutely free from fear. He could not breathe, as does the man who is conscious of his own rectitude, but he had liberty to set himself earnestly, even enthusiastically, to the work that was dear to his heart.

He promised himself a helpful talk with Professor Hutton, who would come most opportunely with needed advice. There were some passages which he desired to read to the Professor, who had promised to communicate the gist of the paper he read at Mrs Sheldon's, —a paper directly bearing on Bertie's new

book. Then there was Mrs Hutton. The sight of her did him good. He remembered her kindly appreciative glances, and even, would fair readers believe it, contemplated a mild flirtation.

Friday evening arrived, and the Heaths' select little dinner-party was a decided success. Pauline had been invited to complete the set. Bertie took down the stately Mrs Hutton. The Professor gave his arm to Gertrude, and Grierson got his own Pauline all to himself. At table the talk was general,—religion and politics being carefully avoided. After the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, conversation drifted naturally upon literary subjects. The Professor discoursed about his essay on "The functions of Illustrative Art," and Bertie drank in greedily every word he uttered.

"Mr Heath, it is curious," remarked the Oxford savant, "that we should both have been writing on the same theme."

"It is indeed," said Bertie, "and that the main arguments in my new book should coincide with what you have just stated."

"My contention is," observed Professor Hutton in measured tones, "that an illustration in a novel, for example, by a famous writer, should be worthy of the context. As a rule, one is disgusted at the class of work which is tolerated. The woodcuts or engravings, in place of elucidating and interpreting the text, only help to mar it. They give the readers false impressions, and fail miserably in their purpose. I have seen editions of great novelists' works, the illustrations to which have made my blood boil. I could have torn them out, and flung them in the fire."

"The reason why such a state of matters prevails," suggested Grierson, "is probably because the artists are not men of the same standard, in their profession, as are the novelists, whose books they illustrate."

"It's not exactly that," argued the Professor. "The illustrations may be meritorious enough in their own way, but they don't convey the intention evidently in the novelist's mind, and herein lies the incongruity. Two minds are at work, and the conception of the one is not that of the other."

"That is one of the central positions taken up in my manual," said Bertie enthusiastically. "We shall only have adequate illustrations, when the novelist is as skilful with his pencil as his pen."

"Your ideal was realised, in a measure," observed the Professor, "in the case of Thackeray, except perhaps those illustrations of his, which partake of the nature of caricature."

"Du Maurier comes nearer to my standard," explained Bertie. "The illustrations to his 'Peter Ibbetson' and 'Trilby' are as fine, of their kind, as anything I have ever seen."

"Ah, yes!" assented the Professor, "I agree with you. I quite fell in love with the Duchess of Towers and Trilby, just from his pictures of them."

Bertie thought Mrs Hutton was not unlike the Duchess of Towers in appearance.

"My favourites in Trilby," remarked Grierson, "are Little Billee, Taffy, and the Laird. These characterizations I consider inimitable."

"*Apropos* of Du Maurier," said the Professor, "there is a brilliant passage in your

admirable work on Italian Art, Mr Heath, where you have made a serious omission."

"What is that?" asked Bertie.

"You have not," continued Professor Hutton, "in your enumeration of the things for which the nineteenth century will be remembered, mentioned Punch."

Bertie and Archie laughed.

"I see you are amused," pursued the learned Oxonian. "I am in earnest, however, and agree with Ruskin, when he says that Punch furnishes the best record extant of the social life of England. I go further than Ruskin, and maintain that Punch will come to be regarded as one of the greatest institutions, either of this or any other century, which can possibly be named. Historically, politically, artistically, socially, and from many literary points of view, its value is simply incalculable."

"It certainly occupies a unique place among the comic journals of the world," said Bertie.

"And has, for more than half a century, proved that the finest wit and humour is

independent of all that is coarse or vulgar," observed Grierson.

"That's where its greatness lies," contended the Professor. "Its pages would never cause the blush of shame to o'erspread the purest maiden's cheek, and yet there is nothing weak about their contents. They are brimful of stuff provocative of healthful innocent laughter."

"Let us drink long life and prosperity to Mr Punch," said Bertie, filling his glass.

The one toast of the evening was cordially responded to, and the three men joined the ladies. The rest of the night passed swiftly and pleasantly away between chatting and music. Bertie took Professor Hutton down to the study, and obtained some valuable information cognate to his manual on "Illustrative Art," and, when the guests departed, Gertrude chuckled over her husband's restoration to his old self. The demon of melancholy had been successfully exorcised by the Huttons. She referred to the change in her own playful way. She told him that detraction and blame were like the biting

blasts, and the chilling frosts of winter, they sent the spirits down to zero; but praise was the balmy breath of spring, the flower perfumed zephyrs of summer, and the fruit scented breeze of autumn. Under its influence the whole man expanded, blossomed out, as it were, accomplished and displayed his best. Bertie acquiesced magnanimously in this poetic view of the situation, and caressed Gertrude in ways to which she had lately been quite a stranger.

"Dearest," he said, "you will be feeling tired after the exertions of the evening, and must have rest. I shall remain up, for a little, to make some emendations suggested by Professor Hutton."

"Ah, love! Can these not wait till to-morrow?"

"No, darling. I might forget. Besides, I'm in the humour, and should catch the inspiration while it lasts."

"Then, dear heart, I will go. Promise you won't be long."

"Administer the words of the oath. See, I hold up my right hand."

"Bertie, do be reasonable. I wish you would give up bothering about books for my sake."

"So I will, but this one, on 'Illustrative Art,' must be finished. Professor Hutton prophesies fair things of it."

"Well, I trust you, Bertie." And, with her husband's kiss on her sweet lips, the fair, blue-eyed, queenly Gertrude retired to rest.

Bertie went to the study, and settling himself at his desk, commenced to make some alterations on his manual which Professor Hutton had suggested. While thus occupied he suddenly remembered about the bunch of skeleton keys that lay hidden beside him. He had forgotten their very existence since that morning when he read Austen Lawrie's criticism. To-night the load of care was strangely lifted from his mind, his mental state was normal, and this, perhaps, accounted for his remembering the keys, and for the old craving, to ascertain what the locked drawer of the ebony cabinet contained, returning stronger than ever. Fancy was busily at work, and pictured to him treasures in the

shape of manuscripts that could be utilised in his present and future books. Why not solve the mystery now? What was the use of any further delay? These were the questions he put to himself. He yielded to the impulse that stirred powerfully within him, and started to his feet. His features assumed the aspect of guilt. He looked furtively about, then glided on tip toe to the door, and listened. All was quiet in the house. It was a splendid opportunity. He whispered to himself words about his good fortune, his success, his ability to deceive, as he drew the skeleton keys from their hiding-place and approached the cabinet. At that moment he thought he heard a footstep in the lobby. He gave a great start, and the keys fell from his grasp. An oath escaped his lips. Hastily snatching the keys from the floor, he put them back in his desk, and busied himself with his papers. Then he listened long and anxiously. Everything was perfectly still. The footstep, he supposed he had heard, must have been the creation of his own evil imagination. He cursed himself

for a coward, and again slipped noiselessly to the door. This time he opened it softly, and hearkened. There was no sound in the house, except the monotonous ticking of an old Chippendale clock. His own nervous state, he knew from the audible beating of his heart. For a moment he relented his purpose. It was getting late. He could wait till a more suitable time. Returning to his desk he put away his papers, and was preparing to leave the room, when the impulse, for the gratification of his curiosity, again came over him. He sighed. "The fates have willed it so," he said, taking the keys, and advancing to the cabinet. He tried several keys without success. The bolt of the lock remained obdurate to the iron entreaties. He began to despair, when he heard a little click, the key turned, and he knew the drawer was unlocked. Its unknown treasures were now within his grasp. He seized its two handles, and pulled it open. There was a flash of fire, a loud report, and with a groan, he fell back—dead.

Gertrude wakened with a start. She had

fallen asleep, but not soundly. Her first thought was of burglars. She hastily threw on her dressing-gown and hurried downstairs, her feet scarce touching the ground. She was totally unprepared for the ghastly scene that met her affrighted gaze when she entered the study. There lay Bertie stretched on the floor. Near the region of his heart a large crimson stain of blood told its terrible tale. Gertrude uttered a piercing shriek, and threw herself on his body. She could not believe that he was dead. Her senses reeled in the presence of the King of Terrors, and she fainted away. Nature is merciful.

By this time the servants were all astir, flying distractedly hither and thither. The butler, an elderly man, was the only one among them who retained a measure of self-possession. Under his directions the apparently lifeless body of Gertrude was gently raised and carried back to the bedroom. He then threw a coat over his master's body, and hurried forth to summon the doctor. Bertie's father and Sir Edwin Lloyd were also roused, and hastened to the house of death.

Dr Martin glanced at the dead body of Gilbert Heath. A glance was enough to inform him that the poor man had been shot through the heart, and that death must have been instantaneous. His attention was next directed to Gertrude. She lay, white as marble, on her bed, her heart beating feebly, and her bosom giving indication that the breath of life was there. He strove to bring her back to consciousness, but all his efforts failed. It seemed as if her spirit were hovering betwixt life and death, uncertain which to choose. Her state was critical in the extreme. At last she stirred, and opened her eyes. They wore an expression of surprise. Had she been dreaming? She murmured something about Bertie. Where was he? It was surely late, and he still worked at his book. Then her eyes closed again, and she lay still in a semi-conscious condition. The doctor said the danger of immediate death was over. He thought she would ultimately recover. Alas, that it should have been so! For Gertrude, the return to consciousness and life, meant tragedy unspeakably worse than

death. Death to her would have been veritably a bright angel. The thought of her living on, a maimed wingless creature, without love, hope or interest, and with the memory of what had been and might have been, is a horrible one to contemplate.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

MR HEATH, senior, and Sir Edwin Lloyd were not long in discovering the cause of Gilbert Heath's death. They found that an old cavalry pistol, heavily loaded, had been skilfully fitted into the drawer, at such an angle as to discharge its contents into the heart of the person who opened the drawer in an ordinary manner. The contrivance was very cleverly executed, and must have been the work of a mechanical genius. The mystery was so far solved. It was not a case of murder or suicide, but simply a deplorable accident. The question arose,—who placed the pistol there? Sir Edwin Lloyd, the custodian of the sealed packet containing the key of the drawer, could come to no other conclusion, than that it had been fitted into the drawer, for some purpose or other, by the

late Professor Marshall himself. Mr Heath, senior, pointed to the bunch of skeleton keys lying on the floor, and the truth dawned on both men that Gilbert Heath must have opened the drawer with one of them for dishonourable ends. They both recoiled from such a thought. The whole affair was a dark mystery. Mr Heath, senior, remained all night in the house, and Sir Edwin Lloyd took his departure, promising to return next morning with Major Verney, one of his co-trustees. Sir Edwin and the Major made their appearance at George Square at an early hour, the former bringing with him the sealed packet, which he opened in presence of the Major and Mr Heath, senior. On the outside of the packet the late Professor Marshall had written these words,—"This sealed packet contains the key of the large drawer in the carved ebony cabinet, which stands in my study. The drawer is not to be opened, until the directions, herein contained, are read."

The directions were to the following effect, —"Having been greatly alarmed for the safety of sundry valuable manuscripts, on

account of an attack by burglars on my house, I resolved to adopt measures to protect them, in view of contemplated sojourns abroad. I have accordingly placed in the left side of the drawer, at a suitable angle, an old muzzle loading cavalry pistol, the butt end towards the left and the muzzle pointing towards the right. I have loaded the pistol with a heavy charge of buck shot, and so contrived that, when the drawer is pulled open by both handles, any villain, dastardly enough to make the attempt, will compress the trigger, and so be shot through the heart. I give these directions that due caution may be observed in the opening of the drawer, and that no harm may result to any innocent person, through my somewhat eccentric design."

Here was a revelation. Gilbert Heath had practically been shot by his own father-in-law. The dead hand had done its work with a vengeance. It still remained inexplicable how a man of Gilbert Heath's character could have been guilty of an act that implied such depths of deceit and dishonour. What were his motives, and what did he hope to gain by such

procedure? He was not like a man in needy circumstances, and the record of his life, as known to these men and the world, gave the lie to the crime the evidence clearly proved him to have perpetrated. While they were discussing the *pros* and *cons* of the matter, the morning post brought a letter marked "Private," addressed to "Gilbert Heath, Esq." His father deemed it his duty to open this epistle. It was from Mr Slowley, and stated that Mr Austen Lawrie had asked him to find out whether his Firm ever had anything to do with the affairs of the late Thomas Rushworth, that an Inventory of the papers of the late Dr Daniel Grieve was discovered, which disclosed the existence of sundry manuscripts by the late Thomas Rushworth, and that, on checking the Inventory with the papers in the box, it was found that a manuscript, of original notes by Rushworth, was amissing. The letter went on to state that the writer had reason to believe that it was from these notes the passages referred to in Mr Lawrie's criticism were plagiarised, and closed with an intimation that he (Mr Slowley) understood Mr Austen Lawrie

had put the matter in the hands of his own lawyers, with instructions to institute proceedings forthwith.

The wily old wizard, Mr Slowley, knew better than to have anything to do with the prosecution of an action, seeing that his Firm were the Agents for the late Professor Marshall's Trustees. Self-interest made him decline the honour, and forced him to couch his letter to Gilbert Heath in courteous, and even friendly terms. Yet it was a humiliating letter for Mr Heath, senior, to read. Bertie's keys were lying on his desk, and on one of the drawers being opened, it was found to contain the missing notes by the late Thomas Rushworth referred to in Mr Slowley's letter. The chain of evidence was now complete, link after link had been discovered, and the deplorable affair stood out in all its hideous nakedness. Sir Edwin Lloyd said he considered it their duty, in the interest both of Gertrude and all concerned, to get the whole tragic circumstances hushed up. Major Verney and Mr Heath, senior, concurred with Sir Edwin. It was absolutely necessary for Gertrude's future

peace of mind that she should be shielded, as much as possible, from the terrible truth. Her recovery, if recovery it could be called, was slow and painful. Death would have been far more welcome than life, but it is one of the inscrutable mysteries that death flies those who court his grim visage, while he swoops down on such as try to elude his cold embrace. Gertrude was condemned to live. Her health was shattered, all hope had vanished, joy and brightness were forever extinguished, and yet she lived on. For the most part her existence was an aimless, listless one. She looked like a beautiful bird maimed at the wing, and this was exactly her condition. She knew in a vague sort of way that her husband had done what the world stigmatised as a dishonourable act, but her mind did not dwell on that. What oppressed her most was the overwhelming sense of irreparable loss, the complete collapse of everything that made life worth having. She loved him still, and her heart went out to him, now that he was gone, with an unutterable yearning. There are women, who, when they once love with their

whole being, love for ever, and Gertrude was one of them. In her solitude and retirement she reasoned with herself, that, even though he had done what was wrong, he only needed her love the more. She shuddered at the thought of his sudden exit,—death having caught him when he was off his guard. No time for reflection, no time for repentance, no time for the offering up of a prayer, and no time for even a cry for mercy. If his sin was great, his punishment was also great. Her wearied, anguish-torn spirit beat against the bars of her prison-house of flesh, and she endeavoured to anticipate the hour of release, when she would find him, no matter where, tell him that she loved him still, and that heaven would be where he was.

Sometimes she travelled back into her life and lived again in the past. She recalled her first meeting with Bertie, and how his had been the strong arm to shield her from harm. Then she dwelt on their friendship that ripened into love, on his wooing and his winning, on the glad espousals and the blissful honeymoon, and she would come to herself with a start,

face to face with reality, and blank despair would take possession, always terminating the circle of her thought.

Those who watched Gertrude lovingly, and tried to soothe a sorrow no human sympathy could reach, said softly to each other, with tears, that, poor thing, the shock had affected her mind, and so it had. They thought her touched with madness. Yet they may have been, and likely were mistaken. Their reason for hinting such a thing was on account of the way Gertrude crooned to herself snatches of poetry. She was always fond of poetry, and had the rare faculty of seeing the poetic side of things. Was it strange, then, that in her hopeless grief and misery, she should find comfort in what the poets have written? Nay, surely this was one of the best signs of her sanity, seeing that the extremes of joy and sorrow are most aptly expressed by the poets. To them men and women turn in their highest flights and lowest depths. Among the verses which Gertrude repeated to herself were some by Chatterton :—

"The marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride,"

as Wordsworth has sung. They were from the Minstrel's Song in the tragedy of "Ella."

"Black his hair as the winter night,
White his neck as summer snow,
Ruddy his face as the morning light,
Cold he lies in the grave below.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow tree.

See! the white moon shines on high;
Whiter is my true love's shroud,
Whiter than the morning sky,
Whiter than the evening cloud.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow tree.

Come with acorn, cup, and thorn,
Drain my heart's blood all away;
Life and all its good I scorn,
Dance by night, or feast by day.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow tree."

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